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MYSTERY MAGAZINE

25

JANUARY 1944

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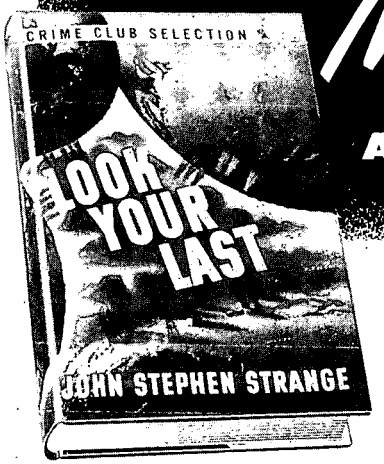

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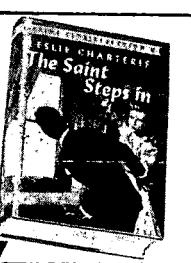

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ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE

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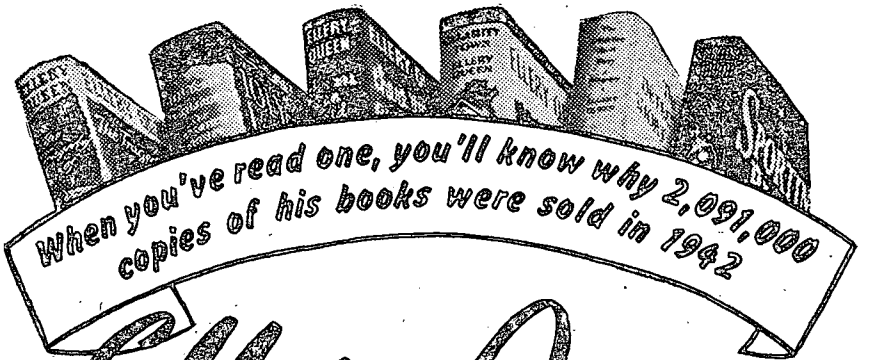

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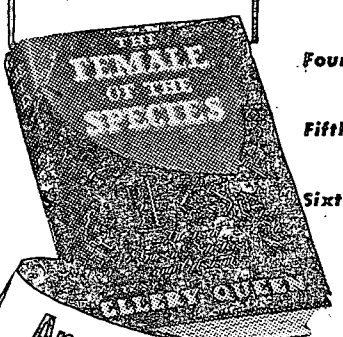

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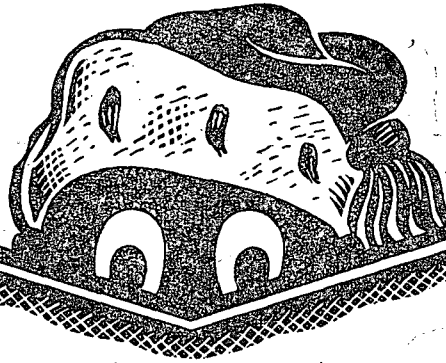

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IF CHRISTMAS COMES—

by STEVE FISHER

THERE are a lot of things we like about Hollywood that the people outside don't know about, could not know about, because they are just the small everyday things of living. They are things bigger than glamor and glory and money, that never make the publicity columns, and yet are the things that bring flesh and blood and breath to us who are idolized, symbolized, fictionized, and looked upon as immortal beings. In the days when I had to struggle to keep body and soul together, I used to think that money and fame would make a difference, but I know now that it doesn't; it makes it easier, but that is all. There is never anything different. So the little things, the elements around us that we see day in and day out are the things that count. They are the things that make us laugh and weep.

Things like the sunshine, and the careless freedom of Hollywood Boulevard, and the parade of girls in slacks, and the blondes who wait on corners and aren't afraid to be picked up if you wear a white sweater and have a Packard roadster. The little barbecue stands where you drive in, after a show, and have food brought to your car, and sit there and eat it and laugh far into the night. Like the beaches which are ordinary beaches but can be gone to either winter or summer. Like the mountains and resorts, and places to dance like the Grove, and places to eat like Musso-Franks where even Garbo will sit at the counter to eat her dinner. Things like open air markets that spray floodlights across heaven to advertise oranges ten cents a dozen; or the

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little movie house that has a surprise preview picture given to them an hour before the second show goes on.

Little things like those, intangibles all, count up, and mean something, and make Hollywood the best place to live and earn your bread in the whole world. The sentiment and the laughter, things too small to mention, things I cannot even remember — and then the very best of all these things. The day that makes the whole year worth living. Christmas Day in Hollywood.

If you ever went away, Tony, could you *ever* forget Christmas? There is no snow. There is only California grass and trees and flowers and the weather at its worst, but when you walk along Hollywood Boulevard you see Christmas different from that you ever saw before. In the first place it isn't Hollywood Boulevard then, it is Santa Claus Lane. All of the street signs are changed to that (remember?) and on each electric lamp for the entire length of the boulevard there is a color picture of a different star. You *are* a star when your picture is in the gallery along Santa Claus Lane because you're with the best this town ever turned out. You're with Marie Dressler and Jean Harlow and Rudolph Valentino and Lillian Tashman — all of those great ones of today too. Mickey Mouse and Lionel Barrymore and Mae West and Clark Gable and Luise Rainer and all the others. You can see them all on Santa Claus Lane and you can see the ones who aren't posted and who are big. The producers and writers and directors and screen editors. You can see them in open roadsters. In the lobbies of hotels. In the doorways of apartments. Sitting in Henri's, or standing at the Brass Rail, or looking in at the Vine Street Derby for turkey like they never get at home. You can see success and failure and people drinking whiskey which a director said was the "curse of a nation."

It was like that when I came on the boulevard at seven o'clock which may be early in New York but isn't in Hollywood. You had called me, remember? I left the hotel as soon as I could get dressed. The drugstore from where you had called was on the corner of Highland, but I thought I would walk. I would walk because it was Christmas and I wanted to see the shops dressed up, and the people who were also walking, but for a different reason than I. They were trying to walk off a hangover.

I remember now that I thought it was queer that you should call me because I thought of you only as an

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agent. A pretty good motion picture agent, I will admit, but no more than that. It was not until later when you started the investigation that I learned your agency was just a blind and that in reality you were a special studio detective. Rather, that your job was to put a heavy foot on the Hollywood crime wave in picture circles; and that made you the world's highest paid detective.

I came into the drug store and you were standing there over the corpse. You were wearing flannels and white shoes, a white sweater and a black coat which is, I guess, the way you always dress, except that your patent leather hair wasn't so patent leather as usual, and I thought I saw trouble in your green eyes, or on your smooth-skinned face.

"Hello, Ben," you said. "Merry Christmas."

"Hello, Tony," I answered. "Merry Christmas to you."

"And Merry Christmas to a corpse," someone said, and I looked up and saw that it was Betty Gale who said that. Betty, your pretty platinum blonde secretary who has curves in the right places. "Hi, Ben," she went on, "how is Hollywood's most prolific scenario writer?"

"I am fine," I said, "who is dead?"

And then we all concentrated our attention on the corpse. It was that of a man, a little man whose hair was sandy and whose blue eyes — which were still open — stared glassily up and past us at some Christmas tinsel on the ceiling. I noticed he was lying there doubled up, and I said:

"How did he get it?"

"Poison," you told me. "He came here for an antidote."

"Yeah," said Betty Gale. "The poor dope was only about half conscious. Must have been whacky drunk. You know. When the store opened he wobbled in and asked the clerk how you could tell when you've been poisoned. He wanted to know how you could tell whether it was poison or appendicitis or indigestion."

"Then he dropped where you see him now," you said, "and he hasn't moved since. The druggist tried to work with him but couldn't. There'll be a wagon pretty soon to take him away."

I nodded, still trying to figure out why all of this should interest you; and why you had called me. I saw a bantam-weight guy with gray hair wandering around the store and you introduced him as Mickey Ryan of the Homicide Squad, but that wasn't until later.

"I suppose you wonder why we sent for you?" you said, and I

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noticed you were looking at your fingernails.

"Yeah," I said, "I *am* a little curious. Just a little though. It's a nice morning to be out."

"Don't you know the corpse?" you asked. I didn't like the sharp edge in your tone.

"No I don't, Tony."

Betty Gale shrugged. "Well, you can't always be right, Tony, my lover. You said Ben Thompson would know the stiff and he doesn't. So what? Do we pay his walking expenses back to the hotel?"

You looked at Betty and said to me: "Isn't it a shame? She's so pretty when she's quiet, too. You would never think she was crazy to look at her, would you?" You lit a cigarette. "Ben," you went on, "I did think you might know the guy, but that wasn't the real reason I asked to see you. Though Betty may claim that it was. The real reason is that I know you are sweet on a girl named Stella Matthews. That's right. You are sweet on her, aren't you?"

"Sure," I said, "plenty."

"Well," you replied, and I noticed a flicker in your green eyes, "it may surprise you to know this, but that guy on the floor was her husband."

I opened and closed my mouth, I was struck dumb with what you had told me. I honestly hadn't known a thing about it until you said it then. I stared down at the corpse and I still couldn't believe it. Stella was so young and naive; so sweet and — oh hell — you know all the words, and I know them, I've written them into enough movies to know them by rote.

You went on: "Yeah, he was an assistant film cutter at Parmet, that's all. I got his name from his wallet. William Blake. Betty scooted back to my office and looked up the data on him. She's a good girl in ways like that." Then as though you had let something out, you added: "We have a file something like they have at Central Casting Bureau, only we list *every* studio job, not just the actors. We have the registered history of everybody here. Sometimes it comes in handy." You didn't say why it came in handy, and I thought at the time it was to help you place talent in the right places, which, as an agent, you were supposed to do.

"So Blake was her — her —"

"Her husband," you said. "I want you to tell us all you can about her."

"There isn't much to tell," I replied, "if you know what love is."

Betty said: "Tony Key never knows what love is at this time in the morning."

"I met Stella at the studio," I continued, as you arched one eyebrow at Betty. "She was just a little extra

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kid. I'm sure she was straight. If she had been married to Blake it must have been off with them, because I took her home once. She lived in a little twenty-five-dollar-a-month apartment on Kingsley Drive. One of those places that has a nice front, and inside, a fold-in-the-wall bed. Sometimes she didn't have enough to eat and I'd help her out. Gradually, as time went on, I fell in love with her. I don't know why or how. A writer who has been earning close to two thousand a week in Hollywood for five years has a pretty wide choice of women. But there was something about the kid that seemed straight and honest to me and . . ."

"And the bug bit you," said Betty.

"Precisely," I agreed.

You yawned and said: "Betty's right, this is one sweet time of the morning to be talking about love. But let's go over and see Stella." You turned to the bantam-weight Homicide detective. "See you in court, funny face," you said. "I'm going to walk around town a little on this case this morning, then I'm going to bed. Don't glut yourself on Christmas turkey."

"Don't worry about me," Mickey Ryan told you, "I do all right."

You and Betty and I left the drugstore.

We drove over to Kingsley Drive. Stella was in red pajamas when she opened the door and I will say she looked neat. She had been in bed so that she hadn't a chance to wash her face, but it was the prettiest face for that time of morning I have ever seen. Her hair was gold on her shoulder and her eyes were as big as quarters, and bluer than the kind of sky they talk about in western pictures. She was a beautiful little tike. And I was very much in love with her.

"Ben," she said, looking at me in amazement. "What is this? It's not Xmas Eve anymore, and anyhow, I'm *not* having a party."

"Honey," I told her, "this is Tony Key. He has something to talk to you about. Tony is a big agent and if you treat him right you can't tell what he might do for you."

"No," Betty Gale came in, "you certainly can't. You can't *ever* tell about Tony."

There wasn't much more Stella could say and we all came into the apartment. It was a mess, all right, with the bed covers all wrinkled, and a man's pipe on the divan, a bottle of whiskey — half empty — on the kitchen table. She had a little half-pint Christmas tree in the window and there were a couple of presents tied up in red paper and green ribbons lying underneath it.

Stella stood looking at us, and you told her right away: "William Blake

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is dead. Poison."

She went dead-white. Her hand went to her throat. "He — he —"

"Don't know," you said, "maybe he drank it accidentally, maybe it was suicide. He was pretty drunk when the end came. But from the way he was talking I think it was murder."

"Murder?" she echoed.

"That's right," chirped Betty. "Something they hang people for in this state."

You asked her: "You were married to him, Stella."

"Yes," she answered frankly, "but — but we had separated. We didn't see each other any more. It was something in the past that I thought I could bury and forget." I noticed there were tears in her eyes.

You moved across the room like a cat then, Tony, in your flannels, your coat, that sweater. I could tell that you had gotten an idea when she said that. You picked up the two presents from under the little tree. "For Bill," you read, then the other: "For Ben."

"For me?" I asked, and I gulped down a lump of pain that was in my throat. I didn't know that she was going to buy me anything, and it affected me quite a lot.

"Yeah, for you," you said, and handed me the package which turned out to be a green smoking jacket. I kissed Stella for it right there because she was already so nervous that she was sitting on the bed crying.

"Look," you went on, talking to her. "You've got to answer some questions."

That was when I interrupted and told you she had had enough for one morning. I asked you who you thought you were to take such authority. I guess I got tough with you. But you told me. You told me off then, and Betty added you were not only a detective, but the world's highest paid one. After that you went on with the questions.

"This present marked 'For Bill', Stella. For Bill Blake, isn't it? William Blake?"

"I — ah —"

"It is," you said, "I know it is. Why did you tell me you never saw him any more?"

"Well — on Christmas."

You were nasty: "I catch. You don't see each other all year, but on Christmas you exchange presents."

"Well — yes."

"Tripe," you said, "plain tripe." Then you turned and picked up the pipe from the divan.

"Pipe," said Betty Gale, "plain pipe." Then to Stella: "Honey, he's going to ask you to whom the plain pipe belongs. Have a good answer ready or he'll catch you up."

"It belongs to Roger West," Stella whispered, "his initials are on the

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bowl of it."

I guess we all looked up then. Roger West, like Clark Gable, was one of the really big stars. I thought she must have stolen it from the studio for its sentimental value, but she went on:

"I don't want to lie to you about anything, Mr. Key. Roger West was here last night. We had a few drinks together."

You put the pipe in your pocket, and said: "You get around, don't you, Stella?"

I was so shocked that I couldn't speak. She had never spoken of knowing West and though there was really no reason that she should have, I felt as though I had been cheated. I felt in my pockets for a cigarette. I knew Stella didn't smoke and finally bummed one from Betty. You were in the kitchen sniffing at the whiskey bottle. It sat among a lot of dirty dishes and wet cigarette butts that had turned brown, the color of the tobacco.

"Well," you said at last, "it's a cinch somebody poisoned Blake, and when we have the autopsy report we'll know what kind of poison. Meanwhile, Betty, my sweet, it looks as though we spend Christmas Day barking in blind alleys. Let's go visit Roger West." You looked at me. "Want to go, Ben? Or do you want to stay here with Stella?"

"I'll go with you," I said. "Stella's in no condition for company."

I just said that in front of her, but when I got outside I told you: "Listen, finding out what I have about Stella has made me pretty sick." This was the truest thing I ever said. "I want to walk it off or something. You don't mind, do you? The murder doesn't mean anything to me, but Stella does — or did. I'm all in a turmoil about her."

You patted my shoulder. "Okay, Ben, but if you want to go, don't think you'll be in the way."

"It isn't that," I said. "It's that I'm tired, and all confused. I want to walk — walk a lot. Then go home and take a cold shower and drink coffee. You know, when you called I rushed out without even changing my shirt — and well, I guess I'm pretty filthy. But I'd appreciate it though, on account of Stella, if you'd drop by and let me know how things turn out. Or Betty could phone me."

"Nah," you said, "we'll come over. Just have a good Christmas drink ready is all."

I wandered around for awhile, just as I told you I was going to, then I went back to my hotel. I was pretty blue. I wished that none of it had happened. I had been happy with Stella and now, knowing what I did, I didn't think I could ever be so

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much in love with her again. I smoked a lot of cigarettes and paced around. When it came two o'clock I tuned in Bing Crosby and heard him sing *Silent Night*, which he sings every Christmas. It's broadcast from coast to coast and across to England, of course, but that too somehow seems like Hollywood tradition.

I had changed my trousers and was wearing the green smoking robe Stella had given me, when you came in with Betty Gale. You looked pretty glum and flopped down in a chair, crossing your legs, and putting a cigarette in your mouth and lighting it.

"Roger West admits loving Stella," said Betty, "which would be swell copy for Winchell except that Tony is paid to keep down publicity like that as well as to solve murders."

She didn't make me feel any better, saying that, and I phoned down for Tom and Jerrys to be sent up.

You said moodily: "Outside of that, West was a fizzle. Couldn't get anything out of him."

"Yeah," said Betty, "I thought he was a He-Man, even though he's as handsome as seven hundred dollars. But he wears lavendar pajamas, and doesn't smoke or chew, and eats oysters for breakfast."

We sat around, not saying much, then the drinks came up. They warmed us, the foam slopping over a little, and you perked up and said: "You know, Mickey Ryan, that little Homicide detective, has a lead, and I would not be surprised but what he was on the right trail this time. The only trouble is that Mickey can't figure a thing about the murder and doesn't know how to prove what he thinks. Well, we're all in the same boat. But Mickey has another film cutter — Wilt Davis — who everybody knows has hated Blake for years. Mickey and the rest of the cops have been questioning Davis. Just a little while ago they let him go."

"Since when," said Betty, "do you go around scavenging discarded police suspects?"

You wriggled your finger at her. "Tush, sweetheart. Cops have discarded killers before."

You got up, walked up and down the room. You stopped at my dresser and stood biting your thumb, though I don't think you saw the mess of junk on the dresser or anything else in the room. You were thinking. At last you turned.

"Well, I can't sit around and drink when there's murder doing. Up and going, Betty. We'll take a look in at this brother film cutter who they say had hatred in his heart that was like rattles on a rattlesnake. He worked right with Blake — Davis did, and — well, come on."

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I was nervous and restless, and terribly blue. I thought anything would be better than staying in the room. I asked: "Can I go along?"

"Sure, Ben," you said.

So I put on my coat and shoes and followed along with you and Betty. I was beginning to admire the way you worked and I had taken a liking to Betty.

You remember what Wilt Davis' apartment looked like. It was pretty ritzy for an assistant film cutter, and the pretty brown-haired maid who answered the door didn't seem to fit the surroundings either.

"I'm beginning to see why these guys like their jobs," said Betty. "This is the next thing to elegant. And elegant is a special word with me."

When Davis came out you would have thought he was a producer instead of a film cutter. He was short, and heavy, and I remember how his eyes shone beneath the heavy black brows that were so prominent on his fat face. He was smoking a cigar; and his radio was playing a popular song: *I Get That Old Feeling*.

"Yes, I disliked Bill Blake," he said, "that isn't news."

"Any particular reason?" you asked.

"Several," said Davis, who was in an ugly mood, "but I see no reason for going into those particular reasons."

"Where were you last night?" you asked.

"Drunk," said Davis. "I was on a round of Christmas Eve parties and I got stinko. I don't remember what I did after midnight."

You went after him for more details, but he stuck to that story, and at last you said we might as well leave. When we were outside walking — the three of us — Betty remarked:

"I can see how the police failed to get anywhere."

You didn't say anything, and we drove in your roadster back to Hollywood Boulevard. You parked in front of the drug store where Blake's corpse had been. We got out and went in. You stepped into the telephone booth for a moment. When you came out you looked at Betty, and told her:

"Cyanide."

"You poor fellow. What you want is a Bromo. Not cyanide. Imagine! So wacky he asks for cyanide!"

"Listen, my stupid platinum assistant," you growled, "cyanide is what they found in Blake's system. I just called the morgue."

"Oh," she said, "oh — that's different."

You lit another cigarette, and then we went out on the boulevard. We

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walked along without speaking and I was looking at the light posts and the pictures of stars on them and glancing about to see if I could spot any of them in the flesh. Then suddenly I noticed you had stopped. Betty and I hadn't noticed and were a few feet ahead. We stopped and came back. You were in front of a cafeteria.

"Let's go in for coffee."

"Coffee?" echoed Betty. "At this time of day? In *there?*"

"Lamb," you said, speaking to her, "because I give you eighty-five dollars a week and pin money on the side, is no reason you should spurn a perfectly respectable cafeteria."

So we went in, though she didn't feel like coffee and neither did I. This was an all night place, and at four in the afternoon — which it was now — it wasn't in any too good condition. A few sidewalk cowboy extras were having their turkey hash, but outside of that the place was empty. You drank two cups of coffee and kept looking around you, and I saw that same troubled look in your green eyes.

At last you said: "You two excuse me for a moment, please." You walked off.

"I knew two cups of that java would do that to him," Betty told me, and we laughed about it.

We laughed, but we were both nervous because we knew that you were up to something and we didn't know what it was. It must have had something to do with the murder. It seemed to me that you had been acting queerly since leaving Davis' place. Twenty minutes passed before you came back and then if we looked into your face for some sign of expression, we were discouraged because you showed no concern. You sat down. You put a cigarette between your lips and lit it.

"Just take it easy, Ben," you said, "and sit here like nothing has happened, and pretty soon Mickey Ryan is going to come in and get you. I phoned him."

"What do you mean?" I said.

"I mean you brought Bill Blake here under the pretext that you were going to sober him up. You got coffee for him and put cyanide in it. Then, because you didn't want the doorman to see you leave you went into the men's room and out that window. When you come in this place you take a check from an automatic machine. The only time you are seen is when you go out and pay for the stuff they punch on your check. So you went out the window in the men's room figuring Blake would die right then and there and that that would be all there was to it."

"You're crazy," I snapped, "you're just crazy as hell, Tony! You can't

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prove that!"

"Listen," you said. "When you went out that window you jumped into the dirt down below. There's foot marks that'll fit your shoe."

"But a lot of men wear shoes my size!"

"Sure. But very few men have a check from this cafeteria up on their dresser, like you have. You must have dumped it there when you emptied your pockets to change your pants. If you had paid for your food you would not have had the check because they take them from you. And so you can't steal a check and come in and eat a big meal on a check that's punched for maybe a nickel. They have them marked by the day. A different color for every day. I spotted that on your dresser a little while ago. I took you along with me to Davis' because I wanted to throw the net around you slowly. I didn't want you to be suspicious. I didn't want you to have a chance to get out."

"What net?" I demanded.

"Murder net," you said, "can't you see that I have the set-up right now? You were jealous of Stella's husband and figured you had to get him out of the way. You and he and Stella were at her apartment drinking after Roger West left. West doesn't smoke and neither does Stella, but the kitchen is littered with whiskey-soaked cigarette butts and I put the rest together. The presents under the tree for both you and Blake. It all fits into a perfect picture."

I was gasping, trying to speak.

"I was first suspicious though," you went on, "when you made the break you did after leaving Stella's apartment this morning. I was first suspicious then and that's why Betty and I came back — *not* to drink your Tom and Jerrys. You said you were filthy, that your shirt was dirty because you hadn't had time to *change* it. You meant to say put on a clean one. But your tongue slipped. But the fact was clear: when I called you you had just gotten in from the street and were still dressed. You were dressed, because an hour previous to that you had put the cyanide in Blake's coffee and had jumped out the window of this cafeteria."

Betty Gale was smiling. "And if you don't think that's a murder case, Ben, try getting out of it when they put the noose around your neck."

"It's a murder case," I breathed, "it's that all right. From such clues you trace my movements which covered hours. Oh, you've got something there. There's no getting around that." I straightened up and I guess my face was pretty pale, but I said: "Can't we go out and have a

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drink on it? One last good Christmas drink before that Homicide man gets here?"

So I'm here in San Quentin now, writing this, Tony. Writing this and watching the hours tick past me. They say it'll never come, that they all hope the same thing, but I'm hoping for a reprieve. Hour after hour I keep waiting for it.

I have written this because it was on my mind and I had to write it, and because also it may be the last writing I will ever do. I was paid two thousand dollars a week for writing, and I guess the habit was too great to break. So maybe it was that. Maybe it was the writer in me that made me put this down on paper, although when I started out, I remember I had something to tell you. It was something I thought you should know, though it really makes no difference.

It was — oh yes — it was that a certain song I heard only once has been buzzing through my mind. The only words I know are those in the title, but they keep coming back. The title is *The Lady Is a Tramp*, and that's what I wanted to tell you. I didn't know Stella was really married to Bill Blake. She told me only that he was someone who had something on her and she hinted that she could never be happy until he had "gone away somewhere." It wasn't until I got up here that I saw the truth. I was obsessed with my love for her, and as Blake seemed to have some mysterious power over her that could make her do what he wanted, and because she cried about this, and because I thought he stood in the way of my love, I killed him. I didn't tell her I was going to, so she is no way an accomplice, but I knew that that was what she wanted me to do.

It wasn't until I went around with you that I saw what it was. She was married to him and they were operating a little blackmail game of their own. He would do the dirty work and she would make up to big-money people like Roger West and myself and they would share the proceeds. But she was getting tired of splitting the money and tired of Blake, and seeing how nuts I was about her she worked on me to kill him. Subtly, of course. You couldn't pin anything on her in a million years. But she wanted Blake out of the way and that was her method. I was the sap. The fall guy. I did it for her. I killed him. But she was the instrument behind me.

I did that because I loved her, Tony, but she hasn't been around to see me, she hasn't even sent me a card; and I keep thinking of how sweet she was, then that song comes

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into my head. It keeps coming back all the time. That song: *The Lady Is a Tramp* . . .

Well, Tony, I guess that's all — only I keep thinking of Hollywood, and the little things that made life there, like the Barbecue stands and Musso-Franks and the markets that spray the heaven with lights to advertise oranges at ten cents a dozen — and of Christmas. It's so lonely here. Maybe I'll get pardoned. Maybe they won't hang me. But, Tony, if — if Christmas comes to Hollywood again and I'm not there . . . If I'm not there, take a walk down Santa Claus Lane for me, will you?

"O"

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H. Douglas Thomson, author of MASTERS OF MYSTERY (*London: W. Collins, 1931*), *the first book-length study of the detective story by an English critic, once described "The Witness for the Prosecution" as*

> *"a brilliantly original narrative of the fight for a man's innocence — with a double surprise at the end."*

You'll agree wholeheartedly with Mr. Thomson's choice of adverb and adjectives.

This ingenious story has never been included in any American edition of Agatha Christie's books.

THE WITNESS FOR THE PROSECUTION

by AGATHA CHRISTIE

MR. MAYHERNE adjusted his pince-nez and cleared his throat with a little dry-as-dust cough that was wholly typical of him. Then he looked again at the man opposite him, the man charged with wilful murder.

Mr. Mayherne was a small man, precise in manner, neatly, not to say foppishly dressed, with a pair of very shrewd and piercing grey eyes. By no means a fool. Indeed, as a solicitor, Mr. Mayherne's reputation stood very high. His voice, when he spoke to his client, was dry but not unsympathetic.

"I must impress upon you again that you are in very grave danger, and that the utmost frankness is necessary."

Leonard Vole, who had been staring in a dazed fashion at the blank wall in front of him, transferred his glance to the solicitor.

"I know," he said hopelessly. "You keep telling me so. But I can't seem to realise yet that I'm charged with murder — *murder*. And such a dastardly crime too."

Mr. Mayherne was practical, not emotional. He coughed again, took off his pince-nez, polished them carefully, and replaced them on his nose. Then he said:

"Yes, yes, yes. Now, my dear Mr. Vole, we're going to make a determined effort to get you off — and we shall succeed — we shall succeed. But I must have all the facts. I must know just how damaging the case

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against you is likely to be. Then we can fix upon the best line of defence."

Still the young man looked at him in the same dazed, hopeless fashion. To Mr. Mayherne the case had seemed black enough, and the guilt of the prisoner assured. Now, for the first time, he felt a doubt.

"You think I'm guilty," said Leonard Vole, in a low voice. "But, by God, I swear I'm not! It looks pretty black against me, I know that. I'm like a man caught in a net — the meshes of it all round me, entangling me whichever way I turn. But I didn't do it, Mr. Mayherne, I didn't do it!"

In such a position a man was bound to protest his innocence. Mr. Mayherne knew that. Yet, in spite of himself, he was impressed. It might be, after all, that Leonard Vole was innocent.

"You are right, Mr. Vole," he said gravely. "The case does look very black against you. Nevertheless, I accept your assurance. Now, let us get to facts. I want you to tell me in your own words exactly how you came to make the acquaintance of Miss Emily French."

"It was one day in Oxford Street. I saw an elderly lady crossing the road. She was carrying a lot of parcels. In the middle of the street she dropped them, tried to recover them, found a 'bus was almost on top of her and just managed to reach the curb safely, dazed and bewildered by people having shouted at her. I recovered her parcels, wiped the mud off them as best I could, retied the string of one, and returned them to her."

"There was no question of your having saved her life?"

"Oh! dear me, no. All I did was to perform a common act of courtesy. She was extremely grateful, thanked me warmly, and said something about my manners not being those of most of the younger generation — I can't remember the exact words. Then I lifted my hat and went on. I never expected to see her again. But life is full of coincidences. That very evening I came across her at a party at a friend's house. She recognised me at once and asked that I should be introduced to her. I then found out that she was a Miss Emily French and that she lived at Cricklewood. I talked to her for some time. She was, I imagine, an old lady who took sudden and violent fancies to people. She took one to me on the strength of a perfectly simple action which anyone might have performed. On leaving, she shook me warmly by the hand, and asked me to come and see her. I replied, of course, that I should be very pleased to do so, and she then urged me to name a day. I did not want particularly to go, but it would have seemed churlish to re-

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fuse, so I fixed on the following Saturday. After she had gone, I learned something about her from my friends. That she was rich, eccentric, lived alone with one maid and owned no less than eight cats."

"I see," said Mr. Mayherne. "The question of her being well off came up as early as that?"

"If you mean that I inquired ——" began Leonard Vole hotly, but Mr. Mayherne stilled him with a gesture.

"I have to look at the case as it will be presented by the other side. An ordinary observer would not have supposed Miss French to be a lady of means. She lived poorly, almost humbly. Unless you had been told the contrary, you would in all probability have considered her to be in poor circumstances — at any rate to begin with. Who was it exactly who told you that she was well off?"

"My friend, George Harvey, at whose house the party took place."

"Is he likely to remember having done so?"

"I really don't know. Of course it is some time ago now."

"Quite so, Mr. Vole. You see, the first aim of the prosecution will be to establish that you were in low water financially — that is true, is it not?"

Leonard Vole flushed.

"Yes," he said, in a low voice. "I'd been having a run of infernal bad luck just then."

"Quite so," said Mr. Mayherne again. "That being, as I say, in low water financially, you met this rich old lady and cultivated her acquaintance assiduously. Now if we are in a position to say that you had no idea she was well off, and that you visited her out of pure kindness of heart ——"

"Which is the case."

"I dare say. I am not disputing the point. I am looking at it from the outside point of view. A great deal depends on the memory of Mr. Harvey. Is he likely to remember that conversation or is he not? Could he be confused by counsel into believing that it took place later?"

Leonard Vole reflected for some minutes. Then he said steadily enough, but with a rather paler face:

"I do not think that that line would be successful, Mr. Mayherne. Several of those present heard his remark, and one or two of them chaffed me about my conquest of a rich old lady."

The solicitor endeavoured to hide his disappointment with a wave of the hand.

"Unfortunate," he said. "But I congratulate you upon your plain speaking, Mr. Vole. It is to you I look to guide me. Your judgment is quite right. To persist in the line

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I spoke of would have been disastrous. We must leave that point. You made the acquaintance of Miss French, you called upon her, the acquaintanceship progressed. We want a clear reason for all this. Why did you, a young man of thirty-three, good-looking, fond of sport, popular with your friends, devote so much of your time to an elderly woman with whom you could hardly have anything in common?"

Leonard Vole flung out his hands in a nervous gesture.

"I can't tell you — I really can't tell you. After the first visit, she pressed me to come again, spoke of being lonely and unhappy. She made it difficult for me to refuse. She showed so plainly her fondness and affection for me that I was placed in an awkward position. You see, Mr. Mayherne, I've got a weak nature — I drift — I'm one of those people who can't say 'No.' And believe me or not, as you like, after the third or fourth visit I paid her I found myself getting genuinely fond of the old thing. My mother died when I was young, an aunt brought me up, and she too died before I was fifteen. If I told you that I genuinely enjoyed being mothered and pampered, I dare say you'd only laugh."

Mr. Mayherne did not laugh. Instead he took off his pince-nez again and polished them, a sign with him that he was thinking deeply.

"I accept your explanation, Mr. Vole," he said at last. "I believe it to be psychologically probable. Whether a jury would take that view of it is another matter. Please continue your narrative. When was it that Miss French first asked you to look into her business affairs?"

"After my third or fourth visit to her. She understood very little of money matters, and was worried about some investments."

Mr. Mayherne looked up sharply.

"Be careful, Mr. Vole. The maid, Janet Mackenzie, declares that her mistress was a good woman of business and transacted all her own affairs, and this is borne out by the testimony of her bankers."

"I can't help that," said Vole earnestly. "That's what she said to me."

Mr. Mayherne looked at him for a moment or two in silence. Though he had no intention of saying so, his belief in Leonard Vole's innocence was at that moment strengthened. He knew something of the mentality of elderly ladies. He saw Miss French, infatuated with the good-looking young man, hunting about for pretexts that should bring him to the house. What more likely than that she should plead ignorance of business, and beg him to help her with her money affairs? She was

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enough of a woman of the world to realise that any man is slightly flattered by such an admission of his superiority. Leonard Vole had been flattered. Perhaps, too, she had not been averse to letting this young man know that she was wealthy. Emily French had been a strong-willed old woman, willing to pay her price for what she wanted. All this passed rapidly through Mr. Mayherne's mind, but he gave no indication of it, and asked instead a further question.

"And you did handle her affairs for her at her request?"

"I did."

"Mr. Vole," said the solicitor, "I am going to ask you a very serious question, and one to which it is vital I should have a truthful answer. You were in low water financially. You had the handling of an old lady's affairs — an old lady who, according to her own statement, knew little or nothing of business. Did you at any time, or in any manner, convert to your own use the securities which you handled? Did you engage in any transaction for your own pecuniary advantage which will not bear the light of day?" He quelled the other's response. "Wait a minute before you answer. There are two courses open to us. Either we can make a feature of your probity and honesty in conducting her affairs whilst pointing out how unlikely it is that you would commit murder to obtain money which you might have obtained by such infinitely easier means. If, on the other hand, there is anything in your dealings which the prosecution will get hold of — if, to put it baldly, it can be proved that you swindled the old lady in any way, we must take the line that you had no motive for the murder, since she was already a profitable source of income to you. You perceive the distinction. Now, I beg of you, take your time before you reply."

But Leonard Vole took no time at all.

"My dealings with Miss French's affairs were all perfectly fair and above board. I acted for her interests to the very best of my ability, as any one will find who looks into the matter."

"Thank you," said Mr. Mayherne. "You relieve my mind very much. I pay you the compliment of believing that you are far too clever to lie to me over such an important matter."

"Surely," said Vole eagerly, "the strongest point in my favour is the lack of motive. Granted that I cultivated the acquaintanceship of a rich old lady in the hopes of getting money out of her — that, I gather, is the substance of what you have

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been saying — surely her death frustrates all my hopes?"

The solicitor looked at him steadily. Then, very deliberately, he repeated his unconscious trick with his pince-nez. It was not until they were firmly replaced on his nose that he spoke.

"Are you not aware, Mr. Vole, that Miss French left a will under which you are the principal beneficiary?"

"What?" The prisoner sprang to his feet. His dismay was obvious and unforced. "My God! What are you saying? She left her money to me?"

Mr. Mayherne nodded slowly. Vole sank down again, his head in his hands.

"You pretend you know nothing of this will?"

"Pretend? There's no pretence about it. I knew nothing about it."

"What would you say if I told you that the maid, Janet Mackenzie, swears that you *did* know? That her mistress told her distinctly that she had consulted you in the matter, and told you of her intentions?"

"Say? That she's lying! No, I go too fast. Janet is an elderly woman. She was a faithful watchdog to her mistress, and she didn't like me. She was jealous and suspicious. I should say that Miss French confided her intentions to Janet, and that Janet either mistook something she said, or else was convinced in her own mind that I had persuaded the old lady into doing it. I dare say that she believes herself now that Miss French actually told her so."

"You don't think she dislikes you enough to lie deliberately about the matter?"

Leonard Vole looked shocked and startled.

"No, indeed! Why should she?"

"I don't know," said Mr. Mayherne thoughtfully. "But she's very bitter against you."

The wretched young man groaned again.

"I'm beginning to see," he muttered. "It's frightful. I made up to her, that's what they'll say, I got her to make a will leaving her money to me, and then I go there that night, and there's nobody in the house — they find her the next day — oh! my God, it's awful!"

"You are wrong about there being nobody in the house," said Mr. Mayherne. "Janet, as you remember, was to go out for the evening. She went, but about half-past nine she returned to fetch the pattern of a blouse sleeve which she had promised to a friend. She let herself in by the back door, went upstairs and fetched it, and went out again. She heard voices in the sitting-room, though she could not distinguish

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what they said, but she will swear that one of them was Miss French's and one was a man's."

"At half-past nine," said Leonard Vole. "At half-past nine. . . ." He sprang to his feet. "But then I'm saved — saved ——"

"What do you mean, saved?" cried Mr. Mayherne, astonished.

"*By half-past nine I was at home again!* My wife can prove that. I left Miss French about five minutes to nine. I arrived home about twenty-past nine. My wife was there waiting for me. Oh! thank God — thank God! And bless Janet Mackenzie's sleeve pattern."

In his exuberance, he hardly noticed that the grave expression of the solicitor's face had not altered. But the latter's words brought him down to earth with a bump.

"Who, then, in your opinion, murdered Miss French?"

"Why, a burglar, of course, as was thought at first. The window was forced, you remember. She was killed with a heavy blow from a crowbar, and the crowbar was found lying on the floor beside the body. And several articles were missing. But for Janet's absurd suspicions and dislike of me, the police would never have swerved from the right track."

"That will hardly do, Mr. Vole," said the solicitor. "The things that were missing were mere trifles of no value, taken as a blind. And the marks on the window were not at all conclusive. Besides, think for yourself. You say you were no longer in the house by half-past nine. Who, then, was the man Janet heard talking to Miss French in the sitting-room? She would hardly be having an amicable conversation with a burglar?"

"No," said Vole. "No ——" He looked puzzled and discouraged. "But anyway," he added with reviving spirit, "it lets me out. I've got an *alibi*. You must see Romaine — my wife — at once."

"Certainly," acquiesced the lawyer. "I should already have seen Mrs. Vole but for her being absent when you were arrested. I wired to Scotland at once, and I understand that she arrives back to-night. I am going to call upon her immediately I leave here."

Vole nodded, a great expression of satisfaction settling down over his face.

"Yes, Romaine will tell you. My God! it's a lucky chance that."

"Excuse me, Mr. Vole, but you are very fond of your wife?"

"Of course."

"And she of you?"

"Romaine is devoted to me. She'd do anything in the world for me."

He spoke enthusiastically, but the solicitor's heart sank a little

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lower. The testimony of a devoted wife — would it gain credence?

"Was there anyone else who saw you return at nine-twenty. A maid, for instance?"

"We have no maid."

"Did you meet anyone in the street on the way back?"

"Nobody I knew. I rode part of the way in a 'bus. The conductor might remember."

Mr. Mayherne shook his head doubtfully.

"There is no one, then, who can confirm your wife's testimony?"

"No. But it isn't necessary, surely?"

"I dare say not. I dare say not," said Mr. Mayherne hastily. "Now there's just one thing more. Did Miss French know that you were a married man?"

"Oh, yes."

"Yet you never took your wife to see her. Why was that?"

For the first time, Leonard Vole's answer came halting and uncertain.

"Well — I don't know."

"Are you aware that Janet Mackenzie says her mistress believed you to be single, and contemplated marrying you in the future?"

Vole laughed.

"Absurd! There was forty years' difference in age between us."

"It has been done," said the solicitor drily. "The fact remains. Your wife never met Miss French?"

"No ——" Again the constraint.

"You will permit me to say," said the lawyer, "that I hardly understand your attitude in the matter."

Vole flushed, hesitated, and then spoke.

"I'll make a clean breast of it. I was hard up, as you know. I hoped that Miss French might lend me some money. She was fond of me, but she wasn't at all interested in the struggles of a young couple. Early on, I found that she had taken it for granted that my wife and I didn't get on — were living apart. Mr. Mayherne — I wanted the money — for Romaine's sake. I said nothing, and allowed the old lady to think what she chose. She spoke of my being an adopted son to her. There was never any question of marriage — that must be just Janet's imagination."

"And that is all?"

"Yes — that is all."

Was there just a shade of hesitation in the words? The lawyer fancied so. He rose and held out his hand.

"Good-bye, Mr. Vole." He looked into the haggard young face and spoke with an unusual impulse. "I believe in your innocence in spite of the multitude of facts arrayed against you. I hope to prove it and vindicate you completely."

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Vole smiled back at him.

"You'll find the alibi is all right," he said cheerfully.

Again he hardly noticed that the other did not respond.

"The whole thing hinges a good deal on the testimony of Janet Mackenzie," said Mr. Mayherne. "She hates you. That much is clear."

"She can hardly hate me," protested the young man.

The solicitor shook his head as he went out.

"Now for Mrs. Vole," he said to himself.

He was seriously disturbed by the way the thing was shaping.

The Voles lived in a small shabby house near Paddington Green. It was to this house that Mr. Mayherne went.

In answer to his ring, a big slatternly woman, obviously a charwoman, answered the door.

"Mrs. Vole? Has she returned yet?"

"Got back an hour ago. But I dunno if you can see her."

"If you will take my card to her," said Mr. Mayherne quietly, "I am quite sure that she will do so."

The woman looked at him doubtfully, wiped her hand on her apron and took the card. Then she closed the door in his face and left him on the step outside.

In a few minutes, however, she returned with a slightly altered manner.

"Come inside, please."

She ushered him into a tiny drawing-room. Mr. Mayherne, examining a drawing on the wall, started up suddenly to face a tall pale woman who had entered so quietly that he had not heard her.

"Mr. Mayherne? You are my husband's solicitor, are you not? You have come from him? Will you please sit down?"

Until she spoke he had not realised that she was not English. Now, observing her more closely, he noticed the high cheekbones, the dense blue-black of the hair, and an occasional very slight movement of the hands that was distinctly foreign. A strange woman, very quiet. So quiet as to make one uneasy. From the very first Mr. Mayherne was conscious that he was up against something that he did not understand.

"Now, my dear Mrs. Vole," he began, "you must not give way ——"

He stopped. It was so very obvious that Romaine Vole had not the slightest intention of giving way. She was perfectly calm and composed.

"Will you please tell me all about it?" she said. "I must know everything. Do not think to spare me. I want to know the worst" She hesitated, then repeated in a lower

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tone, with a curious emphasis which the lawyer did not understand: "I want to know the worst."

Mr. Mayherne went over his interview with Leonard Vole. She listened attentively, nodding her head now and then.

"I see," she said, when he had finished. "He wants me to say that he came in at twenty minutes past nine that night?"

"He did come in at that time?" said Mr. Mayherne sharply.

"That is not the point," she said coldly. "Will my saying so acquit him? Will they believe me?"

Mr. Mayherne was taken aback. She had gone so quickly to the core of the matter.

"That is what I want to know," she said. "Will it be enough? Is there anyone else who can support my evidence?"

There was a suppressed eagerness in her manner that made him vaguely uneasy.

"So far there is no one else," he said reluctantly.

"I see," said Romaine Vole.

She sat for a minute or two perfectly still. A little smile played over her lips.

The lawyer's feeling of alarm grew stronger and stronger.

"Mrs. Vole ——" he began. "I know what you must feel ——"

"Do you?" she said. "I wonder."

"In the circumstances ——"

"In the circumstances — I intend to play a lone hand."

He looked at her in dismay.

"But, my dear Mrs. Vole — you are overwrought. Being so devoted to your husband ——"

"I beg your pardon?"

The sharpness of her voice made him start. He repeated in a hesitating manner:

"Being so devoted to your husband ——"

Romaine Vole nodded slowly, the same strange smile on her lips.

"Did he tell you that I was devoted to him?" she asked softly. "Ah! yes, I can see he did. How stupid men are! Stupid — stupid — stupid ——"

She rose suddenly to her feet. All the intense emotion that the lawyer had been conscious of in the atmosphere was now concentrated in her tone.

"I hate him, I tell you! I hate him. I hate him. I hate him! I would like to see him hanged by the neck till he is dead."

The lawyer recoiled before her and the smouldering passion in her eyes.

She advanced a step nearer, and continued vehemently:

"Perhaps I *shall* see it. Supposing I tell you that he did not come in that night at twenty past nine, but at twenty past *ten*? You say that he

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tells you he knew nothing about the money coming to him. Supposing I tell you he knew all about it, and counted on it, and committed murder to get it? Supposing I tell you that he admitted to me that night when he came in what he had done? That there was blood on his coat? What then? Supposing that I stand up in court and say all these things?"

Her eyes seemed to challenge him. With an effort, he concealed his growing dismay, and endeavoured to speak in a rational tone.

"You cannot be asked to give evidence against your husband ——"

"He is not my husband!"

The words came out so quickly that he fancied he had misunderstood her.

"I beg your pardon? I ——"

"He is not my husband."

The silence was so intense that you could have heard a pin drop.

"I was an actress in Vienna. My husband is alive but in a madhouse. So we could not marry. I am glad now."

She nodded defiantly.

"I should like you to tell me one thing," said Mr. Mayherne. He contrived to appear as cool and unemotional as ever. "Why are you so bitter against Leonard Vole?"

She shook her head, smiling a little.

"Yes, you would like to know. But I shall not tell you. I will keep my secret. . . ."

Mr. Mayherne gave his dry little cough and rose.

"There seems no point in prolonging this interview," he remarked. "You will hear from me again after I have communicated with my client."

She came closer to him, looking into his eyes with her own wonderful dark ones.

"Tell me," she said, "did you believe — honestly — that he was innocent when you came here to-day?"

"I did," said Mr. Mayherne.

"You poor little man," she laughed.

"And I believe so still," finished the lawyer. "Good-evening, madam."

He went out of the room, taking with him the memory of her startled face.

"This is going to be the devil of a business," said Mr. Mayherne to himself as he strode along the street.

Extraordinary, the whole thing. An extraordinary woman. A very dangerous woman. Women were the devil when they got their knife into you.

What was to be done? That wretched young man hadn't a leg to stand upon. Of course, possibly he did commit the crime. . . .

"No," said Mr. Mayherne to himself. "No — there's almost too much evidence against him. I don't believe this woman. She was trumping up the whole story. But she'll never

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ɔring it into court."

He wished he felt more conviction ɔn the point.

The police court proceedings were ɔrief and dramatic. The principal witnesses for the prosecution were Janet Mackenzie, maid to the dead woman, and Romaine Heilger, Aus-rian subject, the mistress of the ɔrisoner.

Mr. Mayherne sat in court and istened to the damning story that he latter told. It was on the lines he had indicated to him in their nterview.

The prisoner reserved his defence ınd was committed for trial.

Mr. Mayherne was at his wits' end. The case against Leonard Vole was ɔlack beyond words. Even the fa-nous K.C. who was engaged for the lefence held out little hope.

"If we can shake that Austrian voman's testimony, we might do omething," he said dubiously. "But t's a bad business."

Mr. Mayherne had concentrated ıis energies on one single point. As-uming Leonard Vole to be speaking he truth, and to have left the mur-lered woman's house at nine o'clock, vho was the man Janet heard talking o Miss French at half-past nine?

The only ray of light was in the hape of a scapegrace nephew who ad in bygone days cajoled and threatened his aunt out of various sums of money. Janet Mackenzie, the solicitor learned, had always been attached to this young man, and had never ceased urging his claims upon her mistress. It certainly seemed possible that it was this nephew who had been with Miss French after Leonard Vole left, es-pecially as he was not to be found in any of his old haunts.

In all other directions, the lawyer's researches had been negative in their result. No one had seen Leonard Vole entering his own house, or leaving that of Miss French. No one had seen any other man enter or leave the house in Cricklewood. All inquiries drew blank.

It was the eve of the trial when Mr. Mayherne received the letter which was to lead his thoughts in an entirely new direction.

It came by the six o'clock post. An illiterate scrawl, written on com-mon paper and enclosed in a dirty envelope with the stamp stuck on crooked.

Mr. Mayherne read it through once or twice before he grasped its meaning.

"DEAR MISTER:

"Youre the lawyer chap wot acks for the young feller. If you want that painted foreign hussy showd up for wot she is an her pack of lies you

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come to 16 Shaw's Rents Stepney to-night It ull cawst you 2 hundred quid Arsk for Missis Mogson."

The solicitor read and re-read this strange epistle. It might, of course, be a hoax, but when he thought it over, he became increasingly convinced that it was genuine, and also convinced that it was the one hope for the prisoner. The evidence of Romaine Heilger damned him completely, and the line the defense meant to pursue, the line that the evidence of a woman who had admittedly lived an immoral life was not to be trusted, was at best a weak one.

Mr. Mayherne's mind was made up. It was his duty to save his client at all costs. He must go to Shaw's Rents.

He had some difficulty in finding the place, a ramshackle building in an evil-smelling slum, but at last he did so, and on inquiry for Mrs. Mogson was sent up to a room on the third floor. On this door he knocked, and getting no answer, knocked again.

At this second knock, he heard a shuffling sound inside, and presently the door was opened cautiously half an inch and a bent figure peered out.

Suddenly the woman, for it was a woman, gave a chuckle and opened the door wider.

"So it's you, dearie," she said, in a wheezy voice. "Nobody with you, is there? No playing tricks? That's right. You can come in — you can come in."

With some reluctance the lawyer stepped across the threshold into the small dirty room, with its flickering gas jet. There was an untidy unmade bed in a corner, a plain deal table and two rickety chairs. For the first time Mr. Mayherne had a full view of the tenant of this unsavoury apartment. She was a woman of middle age, bent in figure, with a mass of untidy grey hair and a scarf wound tightly round her face. She saw him looking at this and laughed again, the same curious, toneless chuckle.

"Wondering why I hide my beauty, dear? He, he, he. Afraid it may tempt you, eh? But you shall see — you shall see."

She drew aside the scarf and the lawyer recoiled involuntarily before the almost formless blur of scarlet. She replaced the scarf again.

"So you're not wanting to kiss me, dearie? He, he, I don't wonder. And yet I was a pretty girl once — not so long ago as you'd think, either. Vitriol, dearie, vitriol — that's what did that. Ah! but I'll be even with 'em ——"

She burst into a hideous torrent of profanity which Mr. Mayherne tried vainly to quell. She fell silent

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at last, her hands clenching and unclenching themselves nervously.

"Enough of that," said the lawyer sternly. "I've come here because I have reason to believe you can give me information which will clear my client, Leonard Vole. Is that the case?"

Her eyes leered at him cunningly.

"What about the money, dearie?" she wheezed. "Two hundred quid, you remember."

"It is your duty to give evidence, and you can be called upon to do so."

"That won't do, dearie. I'm an old woman, and I know nothing. But you give me two hundred quid, and perhaps I can give you a hint or two. See?"

"What kind of hint?"

"What should you say to a letter? A letter from *her*. Never mind how I got hold of it. That's my business. It'll do the trick. But I want my two hundred quid."

Mr. Mayherne looked at her coldly, and made up his mind.

"I'll give you ten pounds, nothing more. And only that if this letter is what you say it is."

"Ten pounds?" She screamed and raved at him.

"Twenty," said Mr. Mayherne, "and that's my last word."

He rose as if to go. Then, watching her closely, he drew out a pocket-book, and counted out twenty one-pound notes.

"You see," he said. "That is all I have with me. You can take it or leave it."

But already he knew that the sight of the money was too much for her. She cursed and raved impotently, but at last she gave in. Going over to the bed, she drew something out from beneath the tattered mattress.

"Here you are, damn you!" she snarled. "It's the top one you want."

It was a bundle of letters that she threw to him, and Mr. Mayherne untied them and scanned them in his usual cool, methodical manner. The woman, watching him eagerly, could gain no clue from his impassive face.

He read each letter through, then returned again to the top one and read it a second time. Then he tied the whole bundle up again carefully.

They were love letters, written by Romaine Heilger, and the man they were written to was not Leonard Vole. The top letter was dated the day of the latter's arrest.

"I spoke true, dearie, didn't I?" whined the woman. "It'll do for her, that letter?"

Mr. Mayherne put the letters in his pocket, then he asked a question.

"How did you get hold of this correspondence?"

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"That's telling," she said with a leer. "But I know something more. I heard in court what that hussy said. Find out where *she* was at twenty past ten, the time she says she was at home. Ask at the Lion Road Cinema. They'll remember — a fine upstanding girl like that — curse her!"

"Who is the man?" asked Mr. Mayherne. "There's only a Christian name here."

The other's voice grew thick and hoarse, her hands clenched and unclenched. Finally she lifted one to her face.

"He's the man that did this to me. Many years ago now. She took him away from me — a chit of a girl she was then. And when I went after him — and went for him too — he threw the cursed stuff at me! And she laughed — damn her! I've had it in for her for years. Followed her, I have, spied upon her. And now I've got her! She'll suffer for this, won't she, Mr. Lawyer? She'll suffer?"

"She will probably be sentenced to a term of imprisonment for perjury," said Mr. Mayherne quietly.

"Shut away — that's what I want. You're going, are you? Where's my money? Where's that good money?"

Without a word, Mr. Mayherne put down the notes on the table. Then, drawing a deep breath, he turned and left the squalid room. Looking back, he saw the old woman crooning over the money.

He wasted no time. He found the cinema in Lion Road easily enough, and, shown a photograph of Romaine Heilger, the commissionaire recognized her at once. She had arrived at the cinema with a man some time after ten o'clock on the evening in question. He had not noticed her escort particularly, but he remembered the lady who had spoken to him about the picture that was showing. They stayed until the end, about an hour later.

Mr. Mayherne was satisfied. Romaine Heilger's evidence was a tissue of lies from beginning to end. She had evolved it out of her passionate hatred. The lawyer wondered whether he would ever know what lay behind that hatred. What had Leonard Vole done to her? He had seemed dumbfounded when the solicitor had reported her attitude to him. He had declared earnestly that such a thing was incredible — yet it had seemed to Mr. Mayherne that after the first astonishment his protests had lacked sincerity.

He *did* know. Mr. Mayherne was convinced of it. He knew, but he had no intention of revealing the fact. The secret between those two remained a secret. Mr. Mayherne wondered if some day he should

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come to learn what it was.

The solicitor glanced at his watch. It was late, but time was everything. He hailed a taxi and gave an address.

"Sir Charles must know of this at once," he murmured to himself as he got in.

The trial of Leonard Vole for the murder of Emily French aroused widespread interest. In the first place the prisoner was young and good-looking, then he was accused of a particularly dastardly crime, and there was the further interest of Romaine Heilger, the principal witness for the prosecution. There had been pictures of her in many papers, and several fictitious stories as to her origin and history.

The proceedings opened quietly enough. Various technical evidence came first. Then Janet Mackenzie was called. She told substantially the same story as before. In cross-examination counsel for the defence succeeded in getting her to contradict herself once or twice over her account of Vole's association with Miss French; he emphasized the fact that though she had heard a man's voice in the sitting-room that night, there was nothing to show that it was Vole who was there, and he managed to drive home a feeling that jealousy and dislike of the prisoner were at the bottom of a good deal of her evidence.

Then the next witness was called.

"Your name is Romaine Heilger?"

"Yes."

"You are an Austrian subject?"

"Yes."

"For the last three years you have lived with the prisoner and passed yourself off as his wife?"

Just for a moment Romaine Heilger's eyes met those of the man in the dock. Her expression held something curious and unfathomable.

"Yes."

The questions went on. Word by word the damning facts came out. On the night in question the prisoner had taken out a crowbar with him. He had returned at twenty minutes past ten, and had confessed to having killed the old lady. His cuffs had been stained with blood, and he had burned them in the kitchen stove. He had terrorised her into silence by means of threats.

As the story proceeded, the feeling of the court which had, to begin with, been slightly favourable to the prisoner, now set dead against him. He himself sat with downcast head and moody air, as though he knew he were doomed.

Yet it might have been noted that her own counsel sought to restrain Romaine's animosity. He would have preferred her to be more unbiased.

Formidable and ponderous, coun-

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sel for the defence arose.

He put it to her that her story was a malicious fabrication from start to finish, that she had not even been in her own house at the time in question, that she was in love with another man and was deliberately seeking to send Vole to his death for a crime he did not commit.

Romaine denied these allegations with superb insolence.

Then came the surprising denouement, the production of the letter. It was read aloud in court in the midst of a breathless stillness.

"*Max, beloved, the Fates have delivered him into our hands! He has been arrested for murder — but, yes, the murder of an old lady! Leonard who would not hurt a fly! At last I shall have my revenge. The poor chicken! I shall say that he came in that night with blood upon him — that he confessed to me. I shall hang him, Max — and when he hangs he will know and realise that it was Romaine who sent him to his death. And then — happiness, Beloved! Happiness at last!*"

There were experts present ready to swear that the handwriting was that of Romaine Heilger, but they were not needed. Confronted with the letter, Romaine broke down utterly and confessed everything. Leonard Vole had returned to the house at the time he said, twenty past nine. She had invented the whole story to ruin him.

With the collapse of Romaine Heilger, the case for the Crown collapsed also. Sir Charles called his few witnesses, the prisoner himself went into the box and told his story in a manly straightforward manner, unshaken by cross-examination.

The prosecution endeavoured to rally, but without great success. The judge's summing up was not wholly favourable to the prisoner, but a reaction had set in and the jury needed little time to consider their verdict.

"We find the prisoner not guilty."

Leonard Vole was free!

Little Mr. Mayherne hurried from his seat. He must congratulate his client.

He found himself polishing his pince-nez vigorously, and checked himself. His wife had told him only the night before that he was getting a habit of it. Curious things, habits. People themselves never knew they had them.

An interesting case — a very interesting case. That woman, now, Romaine Heilger.

The case was dominated for him still by the exotic figure of Romaine Heilger. She had seemed a pale, quiet woman in the house at Paddington, but in court she had flamed out against the sober background, flaunt-

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ing herself like a tropical flower.

If he closed his eyes he could see her now, tall and vehement, her exquisite body bent forward a little, her right hand clenching and unclenching itself unconsciously all the time.

Curious things, habits. That gesture of hers with the hand was her habit, he supposed. Yet he had seen someone else do it quite lately. Who was it now? Quite lately ——

He drew in his breath with a gasp as it came back to him. *The woman in Shaw's Rents.* . . .

He stood still, his head whirling. It was impossible — impossible —— Yet, Romaine Heilger was an actress.

The K.C. came up behind him and clapped him on the shoulder.

"Congratulated our man yet? He's had a narrow shave, you know. Come along and see him."

But the little lawyer shook off the other's hand.

He wanted one thing only — to see Romaine Heilger face to face.

He did not see her until some time later, and the place of their meeting is not relevant.

"So you guessed," she said, when he had told her all that was in his mind. "The face? Oh! that was easy enough, and the light of that gas jet was too bad for you to see the make-up."

"But why — why ——"

"Why did I play a lone hand?" She smiled a little, remembering the last time she had used the words.

"Such an elaborate comedy!"

"My friend — I had to save him. The evidence of a woman devoted to him would not have been enough — you hinted as much yourself. But I know something of the psychology of crowds. Let my evidence be wrung from me, as an admission, damning me in the eyes of the law, and a reaction in favour of the prisoner would immediately set in."

"And the bundle of letters?"

"One alone, the vital one, might have seemed like a — what do you call it? — put-up job."

"Then the man called Max?"

"Never existed, my friend."

"I still think," said little Mr. Mayherne, in an aggrieved manner, "that we could have got him off by the — er — normal procedure."

"I dared not risk it. You see you *thought* he was innocent ——"

"And you *knew* it? I see," said little Mr. Mayherne.

"My dear Mr. Mayherne," said Romaine, "you do not see at all. I knew — he was guilty!"

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To refresh your memory: the famous author of BEAU GESTE *once wrote a group of short stories about a company of French Foreign Legion soldiers besieged by Annamese dacoits and pirates. Faced with almost certain death, each legionnaire frankly confessed the worst deed in his life. If the deed was unanimously acclaimed "dirty" enough, the soldier was elected to dishonorary membership in that small but exclusive society of criminals known among themselves as the Dirty Dogs' Club.*

In this tale the stolid Sempl relates how he "was once very nearly hanged for murder."

The Dirty Dogs' stories have never before been published in the United States.

NO CORPSE—NO MURDER

by P. C. WREN

PALADINO turned his mocking, ironic glance to *le légionnaire* Sempl, a big thick-set man with heavy, lowering face, and eyed him speculatively.

"Well, *mon vieux*," he said softly, "have you ever done anything that might qualify you for membership in the Dirty Dogs' Club?"

Sempl, a conversationalist who took two minutes to consider any question addressed to him and ten minutes to see a joke, eyed Paladino in silence.

Then he growled: "I was once very nearly hanged for murder."

"Pity," observed Paladino. "But not an offence."

"And did you commit the murder?" he asked, breaking another stolid silence.

Sempl laughed gutturally: "I'll tell you."

"It was like this," began Sempl, after taking a long pull at the litre bottle of red wine that stood on the ground beside him. "I was living near a place called Proszl. All alone. In a charcoal burner's hut.

"What I mean is that a charcoal burner had built it and lived in it, and had abandoned it. When I first came to Proszl and scouted round, there it stood, empty as a snail's shell; and just what I wanted, as there were no neighbours. Not near-by neighbours, anyhow. So I just went in and took possession. There was a clay fireplace and a good door, with bar and padlock and everything."

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"*Appartement meublé*," murmured Paladino. "Furnished house, in fact."

"And there I settled down and looked around for — business."

"Business," murmured Paladino. "High finance? Shipping? Railways? Mines? Factories?" he enquired.

"No . . . no . . ." contradicted Sempl mildly, "wood-cutting, and selling it in Proszl. And just a bit of quiet Border smuggling on dark foggy nights, of which there were plenty during the winter, in that part of the world. . . . That and odd-jobs."

"Odd *how* odd-jobs can be, isn't it?" commented Paladino.

"Odd what suspicious swine Police can be, especially near the Border," replied Sempl. "It wasn't very long before they seemed to get suspicious of me."

"Of you?"

"Yes. Half a dozen of them with a *brigadier* came one night and turned my hut upside down while I was out.

"Yes," he continued, "I came back from a little trip across the Border with a bit of tobacco in the turndown of my trousers where they were tucked into my high boots, and some silk stuff round my waist, under my coat, and would you believe it, the fools had lighted the lamp. So all I could do was to wait behind a tree in the darkness, and see who came out. As I say, the Police. And I nearly called out something to them too, as they marched off. Because if the silly fools had only come the night before they'd have made a haul!

"Anyway, next time I was in Proszl and saw the Police *brigadier*, I said:

" '*Sorry I was out the other night. You should have let me know. I'd have been there to welcome you.*'

" '*I'll be here to welcome you, one day soon,*' he said, nodding his head towards the Police Station and eyeing me unpleasantly.

" '*What for?*' I asked indignantly.

" '*For seven years,*' said he, '*and for fun and for smuggling, and for one or two other things.*'

" '*Even policemen have got to live, I suppose, though the good God knows why,*' I told him, and went on my way feeling a bit uncomfortable.

"Smuggling. So they were on to me. 'And one or two other things.' That's what I didn't like. Why couldn't the fellow speak up, like an honest man, and say what he meant? But what's the good of expecting a policeman to be an honest man?

"And that night I sat by my fire and wondered whether one of them had seen me reconnoitring Grandfather Grüntz's place. I haven't told

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you about Grandfather Grüntz, have I?"

"No," replied Paladino. "Has he anything to do with this interesting story?"

"Well, in a way, yes, because it was for murdering him that they didn't hang me. I mean, for not murdering him they were going to hang me."

"The busy fellows! Were they going to hang you for everybody you hadn't murdered?"

"No, only Grandfather Grüntz, the miser. He lived very much as I did — but not in such a gentlemanly way — in a hut like mine, but not so good, and in an even lonelier part of the forest, farther from Proszl than I was. I had offered to change huts with him once or twice, for that reason, but although his hut leaked badly when it rained and had a muddy floor when it wasn't frozen, he said he preferred his own.

"And I knew why. He had got a box of gold buried under that floor. Must have had. Everybody knew he was rich, and his name was Grüntz the Miser. So he must have been rich."

"Clear proof," observed Paladino.

"Well, there it was. Just a feeble old man whom you could kill with one hand, living in a hut with a rotten door that you could open with one hand, for all its bolts and bars. No dogs, no weapons, and no neighbours for miles. In fact, I was his nearest neighbour."

"And you mean to tell us you didn't murder him?" enquired Paladino. "I am disappointed in you, Sempl."

"You wait," grinned the Pole.

"I am," sighed the Italian.

"Well, how many times I went and watched that old devil through a chink between the logs of his rotten hut when he had covered up the window-hole, I couldn't tell you. But I never saw him handling money. He just sat about and scratched himself, or did a bit of cooking; or cobbled himself a coat, and now and again brought out a bottle of something — vodka or barley-wine or plum-gin. Even there he was a miser, for he allowed himself just one egg-cup full of whatever it was. Never more. And when I knocked at his door he'd whisk the bottle back behind the pile of sacks and rags which was his bed, before he'd open the door. And then, when I'd sniff and say:

"'*Something* smells good!' old Grüntz would say, "'*Yeth. It'th mithe.*'

"Mice! There wasn't enough in the place to keep a mouse healthy. Not of food and drink, I mean, but there must have been gold enough to keep all Proszl healthy, if all the

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tales were true.

"And there were tales enough, for the silly old beggar used to wander through the streets of Proszl three or four times a week, with a sack of rubbish on his back, that he tried to sell: rusty keys, insides of old clocks, a cup and saucer that didn't match, hats and boots that people had thrown away. That sort of thing. And although his stock wasn't worth ten kopeks, he'd buy things that took his eye: an old chair, a chest, a pair of brass candlesticks, sometimes even an old picture or a grandfather clock. And he'd find the money too. Haggle all day and give a quarter of what the thing was worth, but he'd find the money.

"And then, off he'd go through the forest with a great piece of furniture on his back, carrying it off to the capital, or some nobleman's house; and come back next day without it.

"Yes, but not without ten times as much in his old leather purse as he had given for it. So of course he had money, and of course it was in the ground under that hut. Where else would it be? There was nowhere else."

"One has heard of banks," observed Paladino.

"Banks! Old Grandfather Grüntz? That dirty old bundle of rags, with hair a foot long and a beard two feet long and his toes sticking through his boots. Do you suppose they'd have let him cross the threshold of a bank, even if he had had the courage?"

"Yes," replied Paladino, "if he brought money."

"Well he didn't."

"How did you know?"

"Shadowed him. Followed him from his hut to his journey's end and back, many a time. He never went near any bank."

"But you never saw him disposing of money? Digging in his hut or anything of that sort?" enquired Paladino.

"No."

"Didn't you go in and have a dig there yourself, one time, when you weren't trailing him?"

Sempl gave his thick guttural laugh.

"*One* time? Many a time."

"And found nothing?"

"Nothing whatever. There's an aggravating old devil for you."

"Disgraceful," agreed Paladino.

"Well, he got what he deserved, anyhow. It was after the first snowfall of the winter, just a hint that the cold weather was coming, six inches or so; and a woodman going into the forest to get a job done before the snow really fell, went by way of the path that led past old Grüntz's hut. And there he saw a

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sight that made him turn round and run back to Proszl quicker than he came, straight to the Police Station.

"For the door of old Grüntz's hut was battered in, and the interior was in a frightful state; his only chair smashed to bits; the table overturned; the bedding kicked into the fire; every sign of a terrific fight. And blood.

"Well, the Police weren't long in getting there, and it didn't take them long to discover that although snow had fallen and then stopped, and had fallen again and then stopped, there were footprints in the first layer of snow that were not quite obliterated by the second fall. And the footprints led from old Grüntz's hut straight to the river. That's the Leiprich, slow and sluggish and, at this time, frozen over with ice about an inch thick.

"Well, when they got there, what did they find but a hole in the ice. A nice convenient-sized hole — to permit of a body being thrust through it. Then that clever brigadier — with his theories all ready in advance and fitting his facts to them as they turned up — discovered that anybody with an eye in his head — the sort of eye that sees what its owner wants it to see — could make out footprints in the first layer of snow, again not absolutely obliterated by the second fall, that led from the hole in the riverbank straight to my hut."

"And I suppose on the strength of that, they arrested you?" asked Paladino.

"No. Not then, they didn't, and I can tell you why. Because I wasn't there. What they did do was to break in and make as bad a wreck of my hut as I had made of Grandfather Grüntz's."

"As *you* had made?" remarked Paladino.

Sempl laughed.

"That's what I said. Yes, a pretty mess they made, with their pulling up and tearing down, and breaking open this and smashing that. And what with digging up the floor and going through everything with a fine-tooth comb, it's a wonder they didn't set fire to the place while they were about it, and burn it down. Anyway, one thing they didn't get was me. But what was as bad from my point of view, and almost worse than their getting me — they got my money. Quite a lot. And that must have put the scoundrels in a bit of a — what's the word?"

"A dilemma?" suggested Paladino.

"Yes. That's it. In a bit of a hole. For if they said they found no money, things wouldn't look so bad against me and I might get off. If, on the other hand, they said they

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found a lot of money; well, they'd have to hand it over. So they split the difference. They kept all the money that was in coin, and produced a lot of greasy notes that weren't worth much, and one big-denomination note for one hundred roubles.

"And why — the artful devils? Because some fool, as some fools do, had gone and written his silly name on the back of it. Ought to be a law against it. People ought to be sent to prison for doing that, and forfeit the money. There it was, plain as your face. *J. Kienkovitz* written on the back in red ink, and you can bet they lost no time in advertising for J. Kienkovitz, and hunting for him in the neighbourhood.

"Well, in the end, they found their J. Kienkovitz, and who do you think he was?"

"Not your long-lost brother? Or the child of the poor girl you . . . ?"

"He was a furniture-dealer in Cratzow. One of those scoundrels who buy poor peasants' antique furniture, fake it up, and sell it to the rich bourgeois to put in their brand-new castles. That's who J. Kienkovitz was.

"And what could he remember about this particular note on which he had written his name? Why, he had paid it to old Grüntz the Miser!

"And that wasn't the only trouble with the money they found, either. Some of it had got smears and stains on it. Of course they said it was blood. Then some clever fellow from Police headquarters at Warsaw, or somewhere, came along and went through his tricks. He found blood between the two snowfalls, if you know what I mean. Any amount of it. And said that somebody, bleeding like a pig, had been carried along the track from the hut to the river; and but for the fall of snow, would have fairly laid a trail of blood.

"Then he actually pretended he could tell them still more about the business, by looking for marks made by people's hands. What do you think of that? Silly, isn't it?"

"What? Identification by finger-prints? Very silly," agreed Paladino.

"Yes. And to earn his cabbage-soup he had to go off to my hut and pretend he found the same hand-marks on things there. Did you ever hear such villainy? Is it likely that my hands were always so dirty that they made a paw-mark on everything I touched — like a bear in the snow?

"And by the time this clever fellow had had his say, and detectives and police had put two and two together and made forty, all that was left for them to do was to find me."

"Lucky for you they didn't, I should say," observed Paladino.

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"Think so, do you?"

"I do. If Grüntz had been murdered, there was a blood-stained track going from his hut to a hole in the ice, and footprints going from there to your hut — in which was money identified as having been paid to Grüntz. What with that and the same fingerprints in both huts, I should certainly say it was a good thing for you they didn't catch you."

"Oh, you do, do you? Well, they did catch me. And yet here I am. See? . . . What do you say to that?"

"Escaped, I suppose?" asked Paladino. "You were able to get away from the Proszl police-cell?"

"Wrong again," grinned Sempl. "I'll tell you.

"I was hiding in Cratzow, waiting till I thought it was safe to go to the railway-station and take a ticket for the longest journey I could pay for. Very uncomfortable it was, too. I was up in a loft over some stables; and any time somebody might have shoved a ladder up to the trap-door and come up and found me. It doesn't look well to be found hiding in a loft."

"Not when the Police are looking for you," agreed Paladino.

"No, and there was the little matter of hunger and thirst, too. And during the evening of the second day I was up there, the man who brought the horse in had somebody with him, and they were talking about the murder, and wondering how much I had got away with, as only a few hundred roubles had been found in my hut.

"Still more uncomfortable I was when I knew that they were actually after me. By name too. It was funny, if you know what I mean, to hear those two strangers using my name. People I had never heard of, and who had never heard of me until that day.

"Well, I stuck it as long as I could, and then I made up my mind I'd sooner be hanged than starve any longer and go without a drink any longer. So, on the third night, I dropped down from the trap-door into the stable, climbed out of the window that pushed outwards — and was fastened on the inside, of course — and got down into the lane that ran beside the shop behind which the stables were.

"I knew my way about Cratzow fairly well, and made for the station. I felt I couldn't get away from the place quickly enough. I might have been safer walking, and then again, I might not. One has to eat, and one has to sleep somewhere, and that means one has to go into shops or break into houses; and I thought the quicker I got out of the country, the better, even if the railway-

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station was a bit of a risk. That's how I figured it out. See?

"Well, I had figured wrong, for I had only got up the steps and across the hall to the ticket-*guichet*, when I felt a tap on my shoulder, and as I jumped round, there was a policeman grinning in my face.

" '*Evening, Sempl,*' says he. '*Cold, isn't it? Never mind. You just come along o' me and I'll put you where you'll be safe and warm. . . . Safe, anyway,*' he grinned.

"Not that he said 'Sempl,' of course. I changed my name when I joined the Legion. Took that of another man. You laugh? Well, I didn't laugh then, I tell you. It wouldn't have been so bad if I had had a good blow-out on the way to the station, but there was I with a belly three days empty and a throat three days dry, and a policeman as big as a house, with the flap of his holster open and his hand on the butt of his pistol.

" '*Come with you?*' said I. '*What for?*'

" '*Fun. See the sights. Inside and out. Outside first, inside after. Come on.*'

"And by the time he had got me out into the street again, there seemed to be half a dozen of them."

Sempl took another long pull at the wine-bottle, hiccuped loudly, and wiped his walrus moustache with the back of his hand, while his comrade eyed him speculatively.

"Well, you'd say that I was for the long drop, wouldn't you?" he continued. "You would have, if you had heard the lawyers talk, anyway. They had got it all, chapter and verse: the motive for the crime; method of committing the crime; disposal of the body; and everything else. A sordid, brutal crime, the fellow called it, standing up there in his black gown and white bib, and wagging his finger at me as though old Grüntz had been *his* grandfather.

"There was one chap who seemed to have been paid to say what could be said on my account, and I came to the conclusion that they couldn't have paid him enough, for he hadn't one-tenth as much to say as the dirty pig who was trying to get me hanged. All he could say was that, in the first place, there was no body; in the second place, that the hundred-rouble note, on which J. Kienkovitz had written his silly name, might have been paid to me by old Grüntz in the way of business; and thirdly, that the man who committed the murder might have walked round to my hut just to put suspicion on to me.

"But the other fellow made short work of that.

" '*What?*' said he. '*No body? No,*

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you don't generally find the body after you've shoved it through the ice into a river. How many miles away do you suppose the body is by now? If you chuck a body into the river at Proszl, you don't expect to find it in Proszl a month later, do you?'

"Then he turned to the hundred-rouble note, and asked the Court to look at me.

"'*Look at him,*' he said. '*Do you think that* he *ever did a job of honest work worth a hundred-rouble note in all its life? And if you do, is it likely he ever did a job of work, worth a hundred roubles, for poor old Grandpère Grüntz? Do you think he ever had anything to sell that was worth a hundred roubles — unless he stole it? And if he had anything worth a hundred roubles, do you think Grüntz would have paid a hundred roubles for it? No, nor yet ten. And, anyway, we all know that Grüntz was no receiver of stolen property, and that's the only sort of property that this fellow ever had to dispose of.*

"'*And as for any talk about the murderer going from that sinister hole in the ice straight to the hut of the poor innocent fellow in the dock there, did anyone ever hear such childish nonsense in all his life? And if he did, let him answer me this question. When the wicked murderer had reached this poor innocent fellow's hut, leaving a trail that the police could follow, why did the trail stop there? Funny that the footsteps should go to the hut and no further, if they weren't made by the owner and occupant of that hut!*'

"And so it went on."

"The judge was a nasty old man, a lot too fond of the sound of his own voice. Gave me a regular lecture; worse than old Double-Chin in the orderly room. Worked himself up into quite a state, saying it was one of the most cold-blooded, brutal, and dastardly murders that he had ever had the pleasure of hanging anybody for. You'd have thought Grüntz was *his* grandfather too. Called him a poor harmless inoffensive interesting old gentleman who was a credit to Proszl, with his great knowledge of furniture and his wonderful skill in spotting a genuine antique, whether in pictures, tapestry, furniture or what not.

"According to the silly old crow on his perch up there, you'd have thought that Grüntz had been killed with a bludgeon, then frozen to death, and after that, drowned, for a change. I laughed, and that made him madder than ever.

"And so I was sentenced to be hanged; and, judging by the noise and the people's voices in Court, everybody was saying '*And a good job too!*' including the fellow who had pretended to try to get me off.

"Well, I got another free ride to

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Cratzow again, where there was every convenience for people who committed murders in the Proszl district; nice stone cells, good strong gallows, and willing hands to work them. And although a man in the condemned cell ought to have every kindness and consideration, I got a lot more consideration than kindness. They spent the time considering how they could annoy me and do me down. Kept me on bread and water. Woke me up at night, every quarter of an hour, to see whether I was still there. I didn't seem a bit popular in Cratzow prison. You'd have thought they had never heard of a murder before, nor had a man in the condemned cell.

"I tell you, I was quite glad when the day came — I lost all count of how time was going — when they marched in, long before dawn, and told me to get up.

"There was the Governor of the gaol, the Chief Warder, three or four turnkeys, a policeman or two, and the lawyer who hadn't done me any good at all, and another one, and the Chaplain; and they made a procession, stuck me at the head of it with the Chaplain in front, and out of the cell we marched, the Chaplain reading the Burial Service as we went along. Fine — burying you alive like that!

"We went down a corridor, turned to the right up some steps, through a door, out into a kind of shed, and there I had my first squint at a gallows. Just a platform like a boxing-ring with a trap-door in the middle. Well, two trap-doors, really, meeting edge to edge, and a lever, like the things in a signal-box, beside the trap-door. Above the trap-door was a great beam with a rope dangling from it and at the end of the rope was a noose.

"When the fellow pulls the lever over, it draws back the bolts that the flaps rest on, and down they drop on their hinges and let you through.

"Well, up goes the Chaplain — up the wooden steps — on to the platform, and does a right-turn and a halt beside the trap-door, being careful not to trust his own weight on it. And I noticed that someone had drawn a half-circle on one side of the crack between the flaps, and the other half on the other side. I had got to stand in that circle, and then my feet just covered the crack. See?

"Well, the turnkey kindly directed me where to stand, and asked me if I'd like to have my eyes bandaged. I said, '*No, of course not. This is the first hanging I have seen, and I might not see another.*'

"'*Quite likely,*' says the Chief Warder, while one of the turnkeys

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takes up the slack of the rope, puts the noose over my head, settles it comfortably round my neck and draws it fairly tight, arranged so that the knot is just under my right ear.

"And then the Chaplain, who had measured it out just right, comes to the place where he does a good gabble to finish just as the lever goes — and I go, too.

"But about three words from the end, the Governor's secretary, or some other useful piece of work, rushes into the shed, yelling at the top of his voice.

"I let my attention wander from the interesting proceedings that were going on, and heard him say:

" '*A reprieve! A reprieve!*'

"And it looked as though all the trouble was for nothing.

"Everybody seemed bitterly disappointed; and I must say I felt a bit that way myself, especially as I had no doubt that I should have to go through it all again.

"The turnkey unfastened the rope, took it off my neck, and the Chief Warder pulled me ashore, so to speak, off the flaps on to the part of the platform on which he and the Chaplain were standing.

"The Chaplain looked a bit silly.

" '*Does that go for next time, Your Holiness, or have I got to hear it all again?*'

" '*Let us trust that you have been pardoned,*' said he, looking puzzled, but not half as puzzled as I felt.

"So the procession formed up again, and back we went to my cell.

" '*Can I take my hat and go, then?*' said I to the Governor.

" '*You can't,*' says he, and added, '*I'll tell you more about it later,*' with a nasty look that meant:

" '*I'll tell you when you're going to be hanged as soon as I know myself.*'

"No, they didn't like me a bit in Cratzow gaol.

"Well, by-and-by, back the Governor comes, with some of the bounce taken out of him.

"It appeared that telegrams had been sent from the Police at Proszl to the Ministry of Justice at Warsaw, or the Secretary of State for Internal Affairs, or the President of the Rat-Catchers' Society, or somebody; and, whoever it was, had sent a telegram to the Governor of the Cratzow Gaol, and the secretary had opened it just in time. . . . Just think. If his wife had kicked him out of bed five minutes later, I shouldn't be here!"

"A thought to make one shudder," mused Paladino. "And what was it all about?"

"You'd never believe."

"No," agreed Paladino.

"Why! Who do you think had walked into Proszl the day before,

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and asked who the hell had been making hay in his house? *Grandfather Grüntz!*"

"*What?*" whispered Paladino, "Grandfather Grüntz?"

"Yes. With a sack over his back, all hale and hearty, and no signs of his brutal bludgeoning, his drowning in the river or his being frozen to death, into the Police Station at Proszl marched Grandfather Grüntz to make complaint that his hut had been broken into!

"Can't you imagine that clever *brigadier's* face, and the faces of those wonderful fellows who had found the footprints under the snow, leading from the blood-splashed hut to the broken ice and thence back to my place — from which I had obviously fled?

"I wish I could have been there when old Grüntz walked in. They must have thought he was a ghost at first. Probably the *brigadier* ducked down behind his desk and crossed himself, until old Grüntz began to curse.

"*Nom de Dieu!* There were some heads scratched that day. Not only in Proszl, either. Why, when the newspapers came out, half the heads in Europe must have been attended to, and not the least puzzled were the kind gentlemen in Cratzow Gaol who had given me such a pleasant fortnight.

"And knowing that the Governor of the gaol couldn't do a thing to me, couldn't lay a finger on me, I told him just what I thought of him and his prison, and during that fortnight I had thought quite a lot.

"But long before I had finished telling him and the Chief Warder and the turnkeys and all the rest of them what I thought of them, they just turned me out. Threw me out of the place. Opened the gates and asked me to go. And by the time I went — with the money they had taken from me safe in my pocket again — there were some red faces in the reception-hall of Cratzow Gaol, believe me."

"And I suppose there were a few in Proszl Police Station too, when you got back there, eh?" grinned Paladino.

"Well, I can't quite say about that," smiled Sempl. "I didn't exactly go straight back to Proszl."

"No?"

"No. I made my way in the opposite direction, and did just what I had been going to do when that policeman pinched me at Cratzow railway station. Got just as far away from that part of the world as my money would take me."

"But why?" asked Paladino. "Why didn't you go back to Proszl, and make 'em all look silly? It *was*

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Grüntz, I suppose?"

"Grüntz it was, without a doubt. There was not another Grandpa Grüntz in all Poland — and only just in time, too, the old devil. According to the paper I got in Cratzow, he had just mooched in as usual, with a sack over his back, and no doubt with a fine wad of rouble notes in the money-belt he wore against his dirty hide. When they asked him where he had been, he said:

" 'Bithneth.'

"He had just been on one of his tramps round the villages, looking into peasants' houses for odds and ends of old furniture and such, and had been away longer than usual. Been laid up with a sore foot or belly-ache or something; and nearly got me hanged."

"Yes, but what about his wrecked house?" asked Paladino. "And the pools of blood and the hole in the ice? And the footprints going from your hut to his, and from his hut to the hole in the ice, and from there back to your hut?"

And again Sempl applied himself to the litre bottle, emptied it, and flung it over his shoulder.

"Open me another, or I won't say a single word," he grinned.

And with a dexterity which betokened practice, Paladino, with the back of the forte of his bayonet, knocked the top off another bottle of wine, filled a *gamelle* and passed it to Sempl.

"No, I wasn't going back to Proszl," he sniggered. "And for why? I *had* gone that night to old Grüntz's hut, determined to make the old devil cough up. I knew as well as I knew my name — which wasn't Sempl — that he had got *wads* there in that hut, and I was going to find it.

"When I got round there, the place was dark, and I was just going to put my shoulder to the door when I heard a dry stick crack under somebody's foot, not far away. So I just crept round to the back of the hut, and lay low.

"This would do. This fitted nicely. The old devil would let himself in, light his old tin lamp, scratch himself, blow on his bit of fire, put on his pot of stew, and sit down to count his money while it warmed up. Then he'd hide the money with the rest; and I was going to see him do it, if I stayed there all night. I wasn't going to be such a fool as to shove his old door in until he was in the act of hiding the money. I wanted more than one day's takings. I wanted the lot.

"Well, by the time I had found a good enough squint-hole — and the old beggar was always plugging them up with clay or bits of rag — I got a

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regular start. There was someone in there all right. He had lit the lamp; he had blown up the fire, put on the stew-pot, and he was counting his money.

"But it wasn't Grandfather Grüntz.

"No, it was an old pedlar, a man I had seen before. More than once. He worked a tremendous round. Took him about a year to cover his beat. I suppose he thought that, by the time he came to a place again, what he had sold there last time was worn out or lost or wanted renewing for some other reason. He was a man who had a good name, and there's no doubt he did a good business. Wonderful, the amount of stuff those chaps can carry.

"And there, beside the bed, was his pedlar's box. No doubt he had met old Grüntz, and Grüntz had given him the key of his hut and told him he could use the place. Told him where to hide the key too. Must have done something of the sort, because I had heard him unlock the door.

"And suddenly the big idea came to me!

"There he was. Old Lowenski the pedlar. Nobody knew where he lived and nobody cared. Nobody knew anything about him at all. Nobody had seen him come and, Name of a Name, nobody should see him go. Prozsl would be a good long way on his round, and he'd have all the money he had taken between there and his headquarters, wherever that might be.

"The chance of a lifetime.

"Round I crept to the door, and had a squint through the keyhole; and I didn't care if he heard me come or heard me breathing. If he did, and came and opened the door, so much the better.

"Well, that was an idea. I knocked. He came and opened the door, and I knocked again. On top of his head this time.

"But how the old devil fought, in spite of that. Fought like a wild beast. He grabbed old Grüntz's chair and caught me a frightful crack with it. And whether it was a genuine antique or not, there was a genuine enough club in Lowenski's hand as the chair came to pieces all round my head and shoulders. Lucky for me I had brought my cosh along, for although he was an old man, it would have taken me all my time to get him where I wanted him, with my bare hands. And by the time we had done, there were certainly what the Police call 'signs of a struggle.'

"Then there was the question of the body. As it was snowing, it seemed to me quite a bright idea to take him along to the river where I knew the ice wouldn't be too thick to break, shove him under, and let

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him continue his travels that way.

"Well, having got his wallet, I started him off, and then — and here's a funny thing — I found I couldn't go back to Grüntz's hut. Simply couldn't. And I'm not what you'd call a chicken, am I?"

"No," admitted Paladino. "You are not what I would call a chicken."

"Still, there it was. Back to that hut I couldn't go. And as I stood there looking at that black hole in the silver ice, I could see the face of that blasted *brigadier*, and hear his voice.

" '*I'll be here to welcome you one day soon — and for one or two other things.*'

"And I decided, there and then, that there were other places as good as Proszl.

"So I made straight for my hut, got my own little packet of savings, and made for Cratzow.

"And you know the rest."

"There's one thing I don't know," observed Paladino, reflectively. "You hadn't taken any money that belonged to Grüntz then?"

"No, not a kopek."

"Then what about the hundred-rouble note endorsed by Monsieur J. Kienkovitz?"

"Yes, wasn't that funny? Old Lowenski must have met Grüntz and done a deal. Met him by appointment for all I know, and Grüntz had given Lowenski that note that Kienkovitz had given him. Funny, wasn't it? It was that as much as anything that put that rope round my neck."

"Very funny," agreed Paladino. "In fact, you are a very funny man, Sempl."

"Yes. Am I elected a member of the Dirty Dogs' Club?"

"A life member," agreed Paladino with his cynical smile.

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It is your Editor's custom to write a descriptive note the moment he has finished reading a story worth reprinting — while the emotional effect and details of the story are still fresh in his mind. This tale by William Faulkner was an exception to that general rule. Your Editor waited. A week, a month, a year. Then he asked himself: Do you still feel the same prickling horror when you recall what was pulled out of that rotten, hollow tree-stump?

Your Editor records that he does — the same gruesome hangover that he felt years and years after he had read the same author's "A Rose for Emily."

When William Faulkner turns his dark pen to a tale of murder, it is not easy to forget — not easy . . .

THE HOUND

by WILLIAM FAULKNER

TO COTTON the shot was the loudest thing he had ever heard in his life. It was too loud to be heard all at once. It continued to build up about the thicket, the dim, faint road, long after the hammerlike blow of the ten-gage shotgun had shocked into his shoulder and long after the smoke of the black powder with which it was charged had dissolved, and after the maddened horse had whirled twice and then turned galloping, diminishing, the empty stirrups clashing against the empty saddle.

It made too much noise. It was outrageous, unbelievable — a gun which he had owned for twenty years. It stunned him with amazed outrage, seeming to press him down into the thicket, so that when he could make the second shot, it was too late and the hound too was gone.

Then he wanted to run. He had expected that. He had coached himself the night before. "Right after it you'll want to run," he told himself. "But you can't run. You got to finish it. You got to clean it up. It will be hard, but you got to do it. You got to set there in the bushes and shut your eyes and count slow until you can make to finish it."

He did that. He laid the gun down and sat where he had lain behind the log. His eyes were closed. He counted slowly, until he had stopped shaking and until the sound of the gun and the echo of the galloping horse had died out of his ears. He had chosen his place well. It was a quiet road, little used, marked not once in three months save by that departed horse; a short cut between the house where the owner of the horse lived and

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Varner's store; a quiet, fading, grass-grown trace along the edge of the river bottom, empty save for the two of them, the one squatting in the bushes, the other lying on his face in the road.

Cotton was a bachelor. He lived in a chinked log cabin floored with clay on the edge of the bottom, four miles away. It was dusk when he reached home. In the well-house at the back he drew water and washed his shoes. They were not muddier than usual, and he did not wear them save in severe weather, but he washed them carefully. Then he cleaned the shot-gun and washed it too, barrel and stock; why, he could not have said, since he had never heard of finger prints, and immediately afterward he picked up the gun again and carried it into the house and put it away. He kept firewood, a handful of charred pine knots, in the chimney corner. He built a fire on the clay hearth and cooked his supper and ate and went to bed. He slept on a quilt pallet on the floor; he went to bed by barring the door and removing his overalls and lying down. It was dark after the fire burned out; he lay in the darkness. He thought about nothing at all save that he did not expect to sleep. He felt no triumph, vindication, nothing. He just lay there, thinking about nothing at all, even when he began to hear the dog. Usually at night he would hear dogs, single dogs ranging alone in the bottom, or coon- or cat-hunting packs. Having nothing else to do, his life, his heredity, and his heritage centered within a five-mile radius of Varner's store. He knew almost any voice, as he knew almost any man he would hear by his voice. He knew this dog's voice. It and the galloping horse with the flapping stirrups and the owner of the horse had been inseparable: where he saw one of them, the other two would not be far away — a lean, rangy brute that charged savagely at anyone who approached its master's house, with something of the master's certitude and overbearance; and to-day was not the first time he had tried to kill it, though only now did he know why he had not gone through with it. "I never knowed my own luck," he said to himself, lying on the pallet. "I never knowed. If I had went ahead and killed it, killed the dog. . . ."

He was still not triumphant. It was too soon yet to be proud, vindicated. It was too soon. It had to do with death. He did not believe that a man could pick up and move that irrevocable distance at a moment's notice. He had completely forgotten about the body. So he lay with his

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gaunt, underfed body empty with waiting, thinking of nothing at all, listening to the dog. The cries came at measured intervals, timbrous, sourceless, with the sad, peaceful, abject quality of a single hound in the darkness, when suddenly he found himself sitting bolt upright on the pallet.

He remembered, all the time he was putting on his overalls and his recently cleaned shoes, how negroes claimed that a dog would howl at the recent grave of its master. He opened the door. From the dark river bottom below the hill on which the cabin sat the howling of the dog came, bell-like and mournful. From a nail just inside the door he took down a coiled plowline and descended the slope.

Against the dark wall of the jungle fireflies winked and drifted; from beyond the black wall came the booming and grunting of frogs. When he entered the timber he could not see his own hand. The footing was treacherous with slime and creepers and brambles. They possessed the perversity of inanimate things, seeming to spring out of the darkness and clutch him with spiky tentacles. From the musing impenetrability ahead the voice of the hound came steadily. He followed the sound, muddy again; the air was chill, yet he was sweating. He was quite near the sound. The hound ceased. He plunged forward, his teeth drying under his dry lip, his hands clawed and blind, toward the ceased sound, the faint phosphorescent glare of the dog's eyes. The eyes vanished. He stopped, panting, stooped, the plowline in his hand, looking for the eyes. He cursed the dog, his voice a dry whisper. He could hear silence but nothing else.

He crawled on hands and knees, telling where he was by the shape of the trees on the sky. After a time, the brambles raking and slashing at his face, he found a shallow ditch. It was rank with rotted leaves; he waded ankle-deep in the pitch darkness, in something not earth and not water, his elbow crooked before his face. He stumbled upon something; an object with a slack feel. When he touched it, something gave a choked infantlike cry, and he started back, hearing the creature scuttle away. "Just a possum," he said. "Hit was just a possum."

He wiped his hands on his flanks in order to pick up the shoulders. His flanks were foul with slime. He wiped his hands on his shirt, across his breast, then he picked up the shoulders. He walked backward, dragging it. From time to time he would stop and wipe his hands on his shirt. He stopped beside a tree, a rotting cypress shell, topless, about

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ten feet tall. He had put the coiled plowline into his bosom. He knotted it about the body and climbed the stump. The top was open, rotted out. He was not a large man, not as large as the body, yet he hauled it up to him hand over hand, bumping and scraping it along the stump, until it lay across the lip like a half-filled meal sack. The knot in the rope had slipped tight. At last he took out his knife and cut the rope and tumbled the body into the hollow stump.

It didn't fall far. He shoved at it, feeling around it with his hands for the obstruction; he tied the rope about the stub of a limb and held the end of it in his hands and stood on the body and began to jump up and down upon it, whereupon it fled suddenly beneath him and left him dangling on the rope.

He tried to climb the rope, rasping off with his knuckles the rotten fiber, a faint, damp powder of decay like snuff in his nostrils. He heard the stub about which the rope was tied crack and felt it begin to give. He leaped upward from nothing, scrabbling at the rotten wood, and got one hand over the edge. The wood crumbled beneath his fingers; he climbed perpetually without an inch of gain, his mouth cracked upon his teeth, his eyes glaring at the sky.

The wood stopped crumbling. He dangled by his hands, breathing. He drew himself up and straddled the edge. He sat there for a while. Then he climbed down and leaned against the hollow trunk.

When he reached his cabin he was tired, spent. He had never been so tired. He stopped at the door. Fireflies still blew along the dark band of timber, and owls hooted and the frogs still boomed and grunted. "I ain't never been so tired," he said leaning against the house, the wall which he had built log by log. "Like ever thing had got outen hand. Climbing that stump, and the noise that shot made. Like I had got to be somebody else without knowing it, in a place where noise was louder, climbing harder to climb, without knowing it." He went to bed. He took off the muddy shoes, the overalls, and lay down; it was late then. He could tell by a summer star that came into the square window at two o'clock and after.

Then, as if it had waited for him to get settled and comfortable, the hound began to howl again. Lying in the dark, he heard the first cry come up from the river bottom, mournful, timbrous, profound.

Five men in overalls squatted against the wall of Varner's store. Cotton made the sixth. He sat on the top step, his back against a gnawed post which supported the wooden

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awning of the veranda. The seventh man sat in the single splint chair; a fat, slow man in denim trousers and a collarless white shirt, smoking a cob pipe. He was past middle-age. He was sheriff of the county. The man about whom they were talking was named Houston.

"He hadn't no reason to run off," one said. "To disappear. To send his horse back home with a empty saddle. He hadn't no reason. Owning his own land, his house. Making a good crop every year. He was as well-fixed as ere a man in the county. A bachelor too. He hadn't no reason to disappear. You can mark it. He never run. I don't know what; but Houston never run."

"I don't know," a second said. "You can't tell what a man has got in his mind. Houston might a had reason that we don't know, for making it look like something had happened to him. For clearing outen the country and leaving it to look like something had happened to him. It's been done before. Folks before him has had reason to light out for Texas with a changed name."

Cotton sat a little below their eyes, his face lowered beneath his worn, stained, shabby hat. He was whittling at a stick, a piece of pine board.

"But a fellow can't disappear without leaving no trace," a third said. "Can he, Sheriff?"

"Well, I don't know," the Sheriff said. He removed the cob pipe and spat neatly across the porch into the dust. "You can't tell what a man will do when he's pinched. Except it will be something you never thought of. Never counted on. But if you can find just what pinched him you can pretty well tell what he done."

"Houston was smart enough to do ere a thing he taken a notion to," the second said. "If he'd wanted to disappear, I reckon we'd a known about what we know now."

"And what's that?" the third said.

"Nothing," the second said.

"That's a fact," the first said. "Houston was a secret man."

"He wasn't the only secret man around here," a fourth said. To Cotton it sounded sudden, since the fourth man had said no word before. He sat against the post, his hat slanted forward so that his face was invisible, believing that he could feel their eyes. He watched the sliver peel slow and smooth from the stick, ahead of his worn knife-blade. "I got to say something," he told himself.

"He warn't no smarter than nobody else," he said. Then he wished he had not spoken. He could see their feet beneath his hat-brim. He trimmed the stick, watching the knife, the steady sliver. "It's got to trim off smooth," he told himself.

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"It don't dast to break." He was talking; he could hear his voice: "Swelling around like he was the biggest man in the county. Setting that ere dog on folks' stock." He believed that he could feel their eyes, watching their feet, watching the sliver trim smooth and thin and unhurried beneath the knife blade. Suddenly he thought about the gun, the loud crash, the jarring shock. "Maybe I'll have to kill them all," he said to himself — a mild man in worn overalls, with a gaunt face and lack-luster eyes like a sick man, whittling a stick with a thin hand, thinking about killing them. "Not them; just the words, the talk." But the talk was familiar, the intonation, the gestures; but so was Houston. He had known Houston all his life: that prosperous and overbearing man. "With a dog," Cotton said, watching the knife return and bite into another sliver. "A dog that et better than me. I work, and eat worse than his dog. If I had been his dog, I would not have. . . . We're better off without him," he said, blurted. He could feel their eyes, sober, intent.

"He always did rile Ernest," the first said.

"He taken advantage of me," Cotton said, watching the infallible knife. "He taken advantage of ever man he could."

"He was a overbearing man," the Sheriff said.

Cotton believed that they were still watching him, hidden behind their detached voices.

"Smart, though," the third said.

"He wasn't smart enough to win that suit against Ernest over that hog."

"That's so. How much did Ernest get outen that lawing? He ain't never told, has he?"

Cotton believed that they knew how much he had got from the suit. The hog had come into his lot one October. He penned it up; he tried by inquiry to find the owner. But none claimed it until he had wintered it on his corn. In the spring Houston claimed the hog. They went to court. Houston was awarded the hog, though he was assessed a sum for the wintering of it, and one dollar as pound-fee for a stray. "I reckon that's Ernest's business," the Sheriff said after a time.

Again Cotton heard himself talking, blurting. "It was a dollar," he said, watching his knuckles whiten about the knife handle. "One dollar." He was trying to make his mouth stop talking. "After all I taken offen him. . . ."

"Juries does queer things," the Sheriff said, "in little matters. But in big matters they're mostly right."

Cotton whittled, steady and de-

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liberate. "At first you'll want to run," he told himself. "But you got to finish it. You got to count a hundred, if it needs, and finish it."

"I heard that dog again last night," the third said.

"You did?" the Sheriff said.

"It ain't been home since the day the horse come in with the saddle empty," the first said.

"It's out hunting, I reckon," the Sheriff said. "It'll come in when it gets hungry."

Cotton trimmed at the stick. He did not move.

"Some folks claim a hound'll howl till a dead body's found," the second said.

"I've heard that," the Sheriff said. After a time a car came up and the Sheriff got into it. The car was driven by a deputy. "We'll be late for supper," the Sheriff said. The car mounted the hill; the sound died away. It was getting toward sundown.

"He ain't much bothered," the third said.

"Why should he be?" the first said. "After all, a man can leave his house and go on a trip without telling everybody."

"Looks like he'd a unsaddled that mare, though," the second said. "And there's something the matter with that dog. It ain't been home since, and it ain't treed. I been hearing it every night. It ain't treed. It's howling. It ain't been home since Tuesday. And that was the day Houston rid away from the store here on that mare."

Cotton was the last one to leave the store. It was after dark when he reached home. He ate some cold bread and loaded the shotgun and sat beside the open door until the hound began to howl. Then he descended the hill and entered the bottom.

The dog's voice guided him; after a while it ceased, and he saw its eyes. They were now motionless; in the red glare of the explosion he saw the beast entire in sharp relief. He saw it in the act of leaping into the ensuing welter of darkness; he heard the thud of its body. But he couldn't find it. He looked carefully, quartering back and forth, stopping to listen. But he had seen the shot strike it and hurl it backward, and he turned aside for about a hundred yards in the pitch darkness and came to a slough. He flung the shotgun into it, hearing the sluggish splash, watching the vague water break and recover, until the last ripple died. He went home and to bed.

He didn't go to sleep though, although he knew he would not hear the dog. "It's dead," he told himself, lying on his quilt pallet in the dark. "I saw the bullets knock it

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down. I could count the shot. The dog is dead." But still he did not sleep. He did not need sleep; he did not feel tired or stale in the mornings, though he knew it was not the dog. He knew he would not hear the dog again, and that sleep had nothing to do with the dog. So he took to spending the nights sitting up in a chair in the door, watching the fireflies and listening to the frogs and the owls.

He entered Varner's store. It was mid-afternoon; the porch was empty save for the clerk, whose name was Snopes. "Been looking for you for two-three days," Snopes said. "Come inside."

Cotton entered. The store smelled of cheese and leather and new earth. Snopes went behind the counter and reached from under the counter a shotgun. It was caked with mud. "This is yourn, ain't it?" Snopes said. "Vernon Tull said it was. A nigger squirl hunter found it in a slough."

Cotton came to the counter and looked at the gun. He did not touch it; he just looked at it. "It ain't mine," he said.

"Ain't nobody around here got one of them old Hadley ten-gages except you," Snopes said. "Tull says it's yourn."

"It ain't none of mine," Cotton said. "I got one like it. But mine's to home."

Snopes lifted the gun. He breeched it. "It had one empty and one load in it," he said. "Who you reckon it belongs to?"

"I don't know," Cotton said. "Mine's to home." He had come to purchase food. He bought it: crackers, cheese, a tin of sardines. It was not dark when he reached home, yet he opened the sardines and ate his supper. When he lay down he did not even remove his overalls. It was as though he waited for something, stayed dressed to move and go at once. He was still waiting for whatever it was when the window turned gray and then yellow and then blue; when, framed by the square window, he saw against the fresh morning a single soaring speck. By sunrise there were three of them, and then seven.

All that day he watched them gather, wheeling and wheeling, drawing their concentric black circles, watching the lower ones wheel down and down and disappear below the trees. He thought it was the dog. "They'll be through by noon," he said. "It wasn't a big dog."

When noon came they had not gone away; there were still more of them, while still the lower ones dropped down and disappeared below the trees. He watched them until dark came, until they went away

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flapping singly and sluggishly up from beyond the trees. "I got to eat," he said. "With the work I got to do to-night." He went to the hearth and knelt and took up a pine knot, and he was kneeling, nursing a match into flame, when he heard the hound again; the cry deep, timbrous, unmistakable, and sad. He cooked his supper and ate.

With his axe in his hand he descended through his meager corn patch. The cries of the hound could have guided him, but he did not need it. He had not reached the bottom before he believed that his nose was guiding him. The dog still howled. He paid it no attention, until the beast sensed him and ceased, as it had done before; again he saw its eyes. He paid no attention to them. He went to the hollow cypress trunk and swung his axe into it, the axe sinking helve-deep into the rotten wood. While he was tugging at it something flowed silent and savage out of the darkness behind him and struck him a slashing blow. The axe had just come free; he fell with the axe in his hand, feeling the hot reek of the dog's breath on his face and hearing the click of its teeth as he struck it down with his free hand. It leaped again; he saw its eyes now. He was on his knees, the axe raised in both hands now. He swung it, hitting nothing, feeling nothing; he saw the dog's eyes, crouched. He rushed at the eyes; they vanished. He waited a moment, but heard nothing. He returned to the tree.

At the first stroke of the axe the dog sprang at him again. He was expecting it, so he whirled and struck with the axe at the two eyes and felt the axe strike something and whirl from his hands. He heard the dog whimper, he could hear it crawling away. On his hands and knees he hunted for the axe until he found it.

He began to chop at the base of the stump, stopping between blows to listen. But he heard nothing, saw nothing. Overhead the stars were swinging slowly past; he saw the one that looked into his window at two o'clock. He began to chop steadily at the base of the stump.

The wood was rotten; the axe sank helve-deep at each stroke, as into sand or mud; suddenly Cotton knew that it was not imagination he smelled. He dropped the axe and began to tear at the rotten wood with his hands. The hound was beside him, whimpering; he did not know it was there, not even when it thrust its head into the opening, crowding against him, howling.

"Git away," he said, still without being conscious that it was the dog. He dragged at the body, feeling it

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slough upon its own bones, as though it were too large for itself; he turned his face away, his teeth glared, his breath furious and outraged and restrained. He could feel the dog surge against his legs, its head in the orifice, howling.

When the body came free, Cotton went over backward. He lay on his back on the wet ground, looking up at a faint patch of starry sky. "I ain't never been so tired," he said. The dog was howling, with an abject steadiness. "Shut up," Cotton said. "Hush. Hush." The dog didn't hush. "It'll be daylight soon," Cotton said to himself. "I got to get up."

He got up and kicked at the dog. It moved away, but when he stooped and took hold of the legs and began to back away, the dog was there again, moaning to itself. When he would stop to rest, the dog would howl again; again he kicked at it. Then it began to be dawn, the trees coming spectral and vast out of the miasmic darkness. He could see the dog plainly. It was gaunt, thin, with a long bloody gash across its face. "I'll have to get shut of you," he said. Watching the dog, he stooped and found a stick. It was rotten, foul with slime. He clutched it. When the hound lifted its muzzle to howl, he struck. The dog whirled; there was a long fresh scar running from shoulder to flank. It leaped at him, without a sound; he struck again. The stick took it fair between the eyes. He picked up the ankles and tried to run.

It was almost light. When he broke through the undergrowth upon the river bank the channel was invisible; a long bank of what looked like cotton batting, though he could hear the water beneath it somewhere. There was a freshness here; the edges of the mist licked into curling tongues. He stooped and lifted the body and hurled it into the bank of mist. At the instant of vanishing he saw it — a sluggish sprawl of three limbs instead of four, and he knew why it had been so hard to free from the stump. "I'll have to make another trip," he said; then he heard a pattering rush behind him. He didn't have time to turn when the hound struck him and knocked him down. It didn't pause. Lying on his back, he saw it in midair like a bird, vanish into the mist with a single short, choking cry.

He got to his feet and ran. He stumbled and caught himself and ran again. It was full light. He could see the stump and the black hole which he had chopped in it; behind him he could hear the swift, soft feet of the dog. As it sprang at him he stumbled and fell and saw it soar over him, its eyes like two cigar-coals; it whirled and leaped at him

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again before he could rise. He struck at its face with his bare hands and began to run. Together they reached the tree. It leaped at him again, slashing his arms as he ducked into the tree, seeking that member of the body which he did not know was missing until after he had released it into the mist, feeling the dog surging about his legs. Then the dog was gone. Then a voice said:

"We got him. You can come out, Ernest."

The county seat was fourteen miles away. They drove to it in a battered Ford. On the back seat Cotton and the Sheriff sat, their inside wrists locked together by handcuffs. They had to drive for two miles before they reached the highroad. It was hot, ten o'clock in the morning. "You want to swap sides out of the sun?" the Sheriff said.

"I'm all right," Cotton said.

At two o'clock they had a puncture. Cotton and the Sheriff sat under a tree while the driver and the second deputy went across a field and returned with a glass jar of buttermilk and some cold food. They ate, repaired the tire, and went on.

When they were within three or four miles of town, they began to pass wagons and cars going home from market day in town, the wagon teams plodding homeward in their own inescapable dust. The Sheriff greeted them with a single gesture of his fat arm. "Home for supper, anyway," he said. "What's the matter, Ernest? Feeling sick? Here, Joe; pull up a minute."

"I'll hold my head out," Cotton said. "Never mind." The car went on. Cotton thrust his head out the V strut of the top stanchion. The Sheriff shifted his arm, giving him play. "Go on," Cotton said, "I'll be all right." The car went on. Cotton slipped a little farther down in the seat. By moving his head a little he could wedge his throat into the apex of the iron V, the uprights gripping his jaws beneath the ears. He shifted again until his head was tight in the vise, then he swung his legs over the door, trying to bring the weight of his body sharply down against his imprisoned neck. He could hear his vertebrae; he felt a kind of rage at his own toughness; he was struggling then against the jerk on the manacle, the hands on him.

Then he was lying on his back beside the road, with water on his face and in his mouth, though he could not swallow. He couldn't speak, trying to curse, cursing in no voice. Then he was in the car again, on the smooth street where children played in the big, shady yards in small bright garments, and men and women went home toward supper, to plates

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of food and cups of coffee in the long twilight of summer.

They had a doctor for him in his cell. When the doctor had gone he could smell supper cooking somewhere — ham and hot bread and coffee. He was lying on a cot; the last ray of copper sunlight slid through a narrow window, stippling the bars upon the wall above his head. His cell was near the common room, where the minor prisoners lived, the ones who were in jail for minor offenses or for three meals a day; the stairway from below came up into that room. It was occupied for the time by a group of negroes from the chain-gang that worked the streets, in jail for vagrancy or for selling a little whiskey or shooting craps for ten or fifteen cents. One of the negroes was at the window above the street, yelling down to someone. The others talked among themselves, their voices rich and murmurous, mellow and singsong. Cotton rose and went to the door of his cell and held to the bars, looking at the negroes.

"Hit," he said. His voice made no sound. He put his hand to his throat; he produced a dry croaking sound, at which the negroes ceased talking and looked at him, their eyeballs rolling. "It was all right," Cotton said, "until it started coming to pieces on me. I could a handled that dog." He held his throat, his voice harsh, dry and croaking. "But it started coming to pieces on me. . . ."

"Who him?" one of the negroes said. They whispered among themselves, watching him, their eyeballs white in the dusk.

"It would a been all right," Cotton said, "but it started coming to pieces. . . ."

"Hush up, white man," one of the negroes said. "Don't you be telling us no truck like that."

"Hit would a been all right," Cotton said, his voice harsh, whispering. Then it failed him again altogether. He held to the bars with one hand, holding his throat with the other, while the negroes watched him, huddled, their eyeballs white and sober. Then with one accord they turned and rushed across the room, toward the staircase; he heard slow steps and then he smelled food, and he clung to the bars, trying to see the stairs. "Are they going to feed them before they feed a white man?" he said, smelling the coffee and the ham.

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The name "Pat Hand" is obviously a pseudonym — in fact, it was invented by your Editor at the request of the true author. Your Editor has given his sacred word that he will not reveal the identity behind "Pat Hand" — but it would be no violation of editorial honor to say that many people would be enormously surprised to learn who "Pat Hand" really is!

"The Showdown" is a most ingenious story about a crooked poker game. It introduces for the first time in print a cardsharp character who, on the basis of this single amazing exploit, deserves ranking with the best. Your Editor is moving heaven and earth to persuade "Pat Hand" to make this story the first of a new series. How about it, Pat?

THE SHOWDOWN

by "PAT HAND"

"HOW MANY?" asked the dealer. Mr. Lindsay Ackers laid his cards down on the table in front of him and regarded the company with a smile which was almost unctuous. He was a great talker. In fact, he had done two things incessantly since the *Minotaur* had left Los Angeles — talk and play poker. But whereas he was a loose talker, he was a tight player and a good part of the eight thousand dollars he had already contributed to the mountainous pot in the centre of the table was velvet.

"Gentlemen," he began. Then he added, with a smile for the vivacious widow from New Orleans who made one of the party: "Mrs. Fordyce and gentlemen. Before I call for cards, there's something I want to say — something pretty important. But before I say it, I want it agreed that it won't affect the results of this hand."

Everyone had been bumped out of the pot with the exception of Ackers himself and the tall, bony man on his left. This individual, who was also well ahead of the game, was down on the passenger list as J. H. Tooker and no one knew anything about him. He favored the loquacious Mr. Ackers with a heavy-lidded stare and then nodded.

"Okay," he said. "But make it snappy."

"It's always said," began Ackers, "that the amateur hasn't a chance against professionals in any sport. That's all hooey. I'm just vain enough to think I can more than

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hold my own against any cardsharp that ever slipped in a cold deck. I've stacked up against a lot of them and I've always taken a bit of their money. I haven't been lucky enough to meet Careful Jones yet but I hope to some day because they say he's the best of them all. They say he never overlooks anything."

Ackers looked about him and expanded visibly with the anticipatory interest he saw in every eye.

"Now I'm going to prove my point," he went on. "It happens that two of the present company are professional cardsharpers."

An uneasy silence settled on the room. The dealer, an enormously fat man named Malone, said nothing as usual; but a dangerous gleam showed in the closely-spaced eyes of Tooker.

"I spotted them the first night out but I haven't said anything before because they seem to have behaved themselves," continued Ackers. "As far as I've been able to see, they haven't pulled a thing on any of us. But, when we decided to make this the last hand, they got into action."

"Who are you naming as the two crooks?" demanded Tooker, who was breathing hard.

"You, for one," answered Ackers, easily. "And the other is our silent friend on my right here, Mr. Malone."

Tooker laid his cards down with ominous calm and got to his feet.

"I won't take that from anyone — " began Tooker.

"Sit down, you!" barked Col. Bingham, suddenly. "We'll hear what Ackers has to say."

"I can prove it," declared Ackers. "And, by the way, I suggest the three of us take our hands off the table and keep them off until this matter is settled. You had better handle all the cards from now on, Colonel."

Malone, still silent, settled back in his chair and folded his arms. Tooker, with obvious reluctance, did the same.

"Now," said Ackers. "Let's all agree to this. Nothing is to be said outside of this room after it's all over. Our good friends, Malone and Tooker, have invested about eleven thousand between them in this pot — more than they've won on the trip. I'm going to win that from them as their punishment. The rest of you will get back what you put in. The other alternative is to send for the captain." He half turned in his chair and regarded the taciturn Malone. "How about it?"

"I don't like your alternative," said Malone. "We'll play out the hand on your terms. The winner takes the money and nothing is to be said about it."

"Well," said Ackers. "I went in

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with the four aces you dealt me, Malone. I'm sure you dealt Tooker four cards to a straight flush. You couldn't be sure whether I would stand pat or draw one so you've provided for both plays. The next two cards to be dealt will fill *either end* of Tooker's straight flush. I'm so sure of this, I'll forfeit my interest in the pot if I'm wrong."

"But you don't want to play it out," said Bingham, in amazement. "You can't win."

"I can win," said Ackers. "I read about this hand somewhere and I know the answer. I'm going to *throw away one of my aces* and draw two cards. You'll oblige me, Colonel, by dealing me those two cards on the top of the deck!"

The rest of the company gasped and then began to laugh. "Of course!" cried Mrs. Fordyce. "That does it. But I would never have thought of it!"

Bingham dealt the two cards in front of Ackers and then looked enquiringly at Tooker.

"One," said the latter.

"Now turn mine over," said Ackers, triumphantly. "What did I tell you! You've given me the jack and six of diamonds. I think you'll find Tooker went in with the ten, nine, eight and seven of diamonds."

Bingham turned over the four original cards in front of Tooker. The ten, nine, eight and seven of diamonds! Ackers had been right. The two men stood convicted.

Then the Colonel turned over the card he had dealt to Tooker. Ackers looked at it and a cold sweat broke out all over him. The rest of the company gasped again.

It was the three of diamonds!

"All pink," said Tooker. His long, hairy fingers reached out and began to rake in the pot. "It seems that I win. Remember the agreement, gentlemen."

Mrs. Fordyce caught up with the slow moving bulk of Malone as he left the cabin a few minutes later.

"That was pretty clever," she said. "You had everything figured out, hadn't you? You were ready for him, even if he was clever enough to draw two. You have a little of my money, Mr. Malone, but I'll forgive you that if you'll tell just who you are. I'm curious about you."

The fat man smiled amiably. "Madame," he said, "my friends know me as Careful Jones—but from now on I think I'll call myself *Extra*-Careful Jones!"

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Your Editor, dipping his inquisitive nose among the 1903 issues of the London "Strand Magazine," yelped with joy when he came upon this bizarre and terrifying story by one of America's favorite authors. Surely "The Flying Death" is one of Samuel Hopkins Adams's earliest detective stories — if not actually his first!

Here is a tale of seemingly inexplicable murder — as clever and baffling today as it must have been forty years ago. But even more fascinating is the thematic idea — the legend of the roc — the billion-year-old Pteranodon, with its twenty-foot spread of bat-like wings and its four-foot bayonet beak, that struck so mercilessly on a Long Island beach. . . .

But read for yourself this strange story of the monstrous Lord of the Air.

THE FLYING DEATH

by SAMUEL HOPKINS ADAMS

DOCUMENT NO. 1. — A letter of explanation from Harris Haynes, Reporter for the *New Era*, New York, off on Vacation, to his Managing Editor.

MONTAUK POINT, L.I., Sept. 20th, 1902.
MR. JOHN CLARE, Managing Editor,
The *New Era*, New York City.

MY DEAR MR. CLARE, — Here is a case for your personal consideration. At present it is — or, at least, it would appear on paper — a bit of pure insanity. Lest you should think it that, and myself the victim, I have two witnesses of character and reputation who will corroborate every fact in the case, and who go farther with the incredible inferences than I can bring myself to do. They are Professor Willis Ravenden, expert in entomology and an enthusiast in every other branch of science, and Stanford Colton, son of old Colton, of the Button Trust, and himself a medical student about to obtain his diploma. Colton, like myself, is recuperating. Professor Ravenden is studying the metamorphosis of a small, sky-blue butterfly species of insect with a disjointed name which inhabits these parts.

We three constitute the total late-season patronage of Third House, and probably five per cent. of the population of this forty square miles of grassland, the remainder being the men of the Life Saving Service, the farmer families of First, Second, and Third Houses, and a little settlement of fishermen on the Sound side.

This afternoon — yesterday, to be accurate, as it is now past midnight — we three went out for a tramp.

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On our return we ran into a fine, driving rain that blotted out the landscape. It's no trick at all to get lost in this country, where the hillocks were all hatched out of the same egg and the scrub-oak patches out of the same acorn. For an hour or so we circled around. Then we caught the booming of the surf plainly, and came presently to the crest of the sand-cliff, eighty feet above the beach. As the mist blew away we saw, a few yards out from the cliff's foot and a short distance to the east, the body of a man lying on the hard sand.

There was something in the huddled posture that struck the eye with a shock as of violence. With every reason for assuming at first sight the body to have been washed up, I somehow knew that the man had not met death by the waves. Where we stood the cliff fell too precipitously to admit of descent, but opposite the body it was lower, and here a ravine cut sharply through a dip between the hills at right angles to the beach. We half fell, half slipped down the cliff, made our way to the gully's opening, and came upon a soft and pebbly beach only a few feet wide, beyond which the hard, clean level of sand stretched to the receding waves. As we reached the open a man appeared around a point to the eastward, saw the body, and broke into a run. Colton had started toward the body, but I called him back. I didn't want the sand marked just then. Keeping close to the cliff's edge, we went forward to meet the man. As soon as he could make himself heard above the surf he hailed us.

"How long has that been there?"

"We've just found it," said Colton, as we turned out toward the sea. "It must have been washed up at high tide."

"I'm the coastguardsman from the Bow Hill Station," said the man, briefly.

"We are guests at Third House," said I. "We'll go through with this together."

"Come along, then," said he.

We were now on a line with the body, which lay with the head toward the waves. The coastguardsman suddenly checked his steps and exclaimed, "It's Paul Serdholm." Then he rushed forward with a great cry, "He's been murdered!"

"Oh, surely not murdered," expostulated the Professor, nervously. "He's been drowned, and ——"

"Drowned!" cried the other. "And how about that gash in the back of his neck? He's the guard from Sand Spit, two miles below. Three hours ago I saw him on the cliff yonder. Since then he's come and gone between here and his station. And —" he gulped suddenly and turned upon

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us so sharply that the Professor jumped — "what's he met with?"

"The wound might have been made by the surf dashing him on a sharp rock," I suggested.

"No, sir," said the coastguardsman, with emphasis. "The tide ain't this high once in a month. It's murder, that's what it is — foul murder," and he bent over the dead man with twitching shoulders.

"He's right," said Colton, who had been hastily examining the corpse. "This is no drowning case. The man was stabbed and died instantly. Was he a friend of yours?" he asked of the guard.

"No; nor of nobody's, was Paul Serdholm," replied the man. "No later than last week we quarrelled." He paused, looking blankly at us.

"How long would you say he had been dead?" I asked Colton.

"A very few minutes."

"Then get to the top of the cliff and scatter," I said; "the murderer must have escaped that way. From the hilltop you can see the whole country. Keep off that sand, can't you? Make a detour to the gully."

"And what will you do?" inquired Colton, looking at me curiously.

"Stay here and study this out," I replied, in a low tone. "You and the Professor meet me at Sand Spit in half an hour. Guard, if you don't see anything, come back here in fifteen minutes." He hesitated. "I've had ten years' experience in murder cases," I added. "If you will do as you're told for the next few minutes we should clear this thing up."

No sooner has they disappeared on the high ground than I set myself to the solution of the problem. Inland from the body stretched the hard beach. Not one of us had stepped between the body and the soft sand into which the cliff sloped. In this soft, pebbly mass of rubble footprints would be indeterminable. Anywhere else they should stand out like the stamp on a coin. As we approached I had noticed that there were no prints to the east. On the side of the sea there was nothing except numerous faint bird tracks, extending almost to the water. Taking off my shoes I followed the spoor of the dead man. It stood out, plain as a poster, to the westward. For a hundred yards I followed it. There was no parallel track. To make certain that his slayer had not crept upon him from that direction, I examined the prints for the marks of superimposed steps. None was there. Three sides, then, were eliminated. My first hasty glance at the sand between the body and the cliff had shown me nothing. Here, however, must be the evidence. Striking off from the dead man's line, I

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walked out upon the hard surface.

The sand was deeply indented beyond the body, where the three men had hurried across to begin the hunt. But no other footmark broke its evenness. Not until I was almost on a line between the corpse and the mouth of the gully did I find a clue. Clearly imprinted on the clean level was the outline of a huge claw. There were the five talons and the nub of the foot. A little forward and to one side was a similar mark, except that it was slanted differently. Step by step, with starting eyes and shuddering mind, I followed the trail. Then I became aware of a second, confusing the first, the track of the same creature. At first the second track was distinct, then it merged with the first, only to diverge again. In this second series the points of the talons were toward the cliff. From the body to the soft sand stretched the unbroken lines. *Nowhere else within a radius of many yards was there any other indication.* The sand lay blank as a white sheet of paper; as blank as my mind, which struggled with one stupefying thought — that between the dead life-saver and the refuge of the cliff no creature had passed except one that stalked on monstrous clawed feet!

My first thought was to preserve the evidence for a more careful examination. I hastily collected some flat rocks and had covered those marks nearest the soft sand when I heard a hail. For the present I didn't want the others to know what I had found. I wanted to think it out, undisturbed by conflicting theories. So I hastily returned, and was putting on my shoes when the Bow Hill coastguardsman—his name was Schenck — came out of the gully.

"See anything?" I called.

"Nothing to the northward. Have you found anything?"

"Nothing definite," I replied. "Don't cross the sand there. Keep along down. We'll go to the Sand Spit Station and report this."

But the man was staring out beyond my little column of rock shelters.

"What's that thing?" he said, pointing to the nearest unsheltered print. "Heavens! It looks like a bird track. And it leads straight to the body," he cried, in a voice that jangled on my nerves But when he began to look fearfully overhead into the gathering darkness, drawing in his shoulders like one shrinking from a blow, that was too much. I jumped to my feet, grabbed him by the arm, and started him along.

"Don't be a fool," I said. "Keep this to yourself. I won't have a lot of idiots prowling around those

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tracks. Understand? You're to report this murder and say nothing about what you don't know. Later we'll take it up again."

The man seemed stunned. He walked along quietly, close to me, and it was no comfort to feel him now and again shaken by a violent shudder. We had nearly reached the station when Professor Ravenden and Colton came down to the beach in front of us. But they had nothing to tell.

Before we reached the station I cleared another point to my satisfaction.

"The man wasn't stabbed; he was shot," I said.

"I'll stake my life that's no bullet wound," cried Colton, quickly. "I've seen plenty of shooting cases. The bullet never was cast that made such a gap in a man's head as that. It was a sharp instrument, with power behind it."

"To Mr. Colton's opinion I must add my own for what it is worth," said Professor Ravenden.

"Can you qualify as an expert?" I demanded, with the rudeness of rasped nerves and in some surprise at the tone of certainty in the old boy's voice.

"When in search of a sub-species of the Papilionidæ in the Orinoco region," said he, mildly, "my party was attacked by the Indians that infest the river. After we had beaten them off it fell to my lot to attend the wounded. I thus had opportunity to observe the wounds made by their slender spears. The incision under consideration bears a rather striking resemblance to the spear-gashes which I then saw. I may add that I brought away my specimens of Papilionidæ intact, although we lost most of our provisions."

"No man has been near enough the spot where Serdholm was struck down to stab him," I said. "Our footprints are plain; so are his. There are no others. The man was shot by someone lying in the gully or on the cliff."

"I'll bet you five hundred to five dollars that the post-mortem doesn't result in the finding of a bullet," cried Colton.

I accepted, and it was agreed that he should stay and report from the post-mortem. At the station I talked with several of the men, and, assuming for the time that the case presented no unusual features of murder, tried to get at some helpful clue. Motive was my first aim. Results were scant. It is true that there was a general dislike of Serdholm, who was a moody and somewhat mysterious character, having come from nobody knew whence. On the other hand, no one had anything serious against him. The four clues

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that I struck, such as they were, I can tabulate briefly: —

(I.) A week ago Serdholm returned from Amagansett with a bruised face. He had been in a street fight with a local loafer who had attacked him when drunk. Report brought back by one of the farmers that the life-saver beat the other fellow soundly, who went away threatening vengeance. Found out by telephone that the loafer was in Amagansett as late as five o'clock this afternoon.

(II.) Two months ago Serdholm accused a local fisherman of stealing some tobacco. Nothing further since heard of the matter.

(III.) Three weeks ago a stranded juggler and mountebank found his way here and asked aid of Serdholm; claimed to be his cousin. Serdholm sent him away next day. Played some tricks and collected a little money from the men. Serdholm, angry at the jeers of the men about his relative, threw a heavy stick at him, knocking him down. As soon as he was able to walk juggler went away crying. Not since seen.

(IV.) This is the most direct clue for motive and opportunity. Coast-guard Schenck (the man who met us at the scene of the murder) quarrelled with the dead man over the daughter of a farmer, who prefers Schenck. They fought, but were separated. Schenck blacked Serdholm's eye. Serdholm threatened to get square. Schenck cannot prove absolute alibi. His bearing and behaviour, however, are those of an innocent man. Moreover, the knife he carried was too small to have made the wound that killed Serdholm. And how could Schenck — or any other man — have stabbed the victim and left no track on the sand? That is the blank wall against which I come at every turn of conjecture.

Professor Ravenden, Schenck, and I started back, we two to Third House, Schenck to his station. Colton remained to wait for the coroner, who had sent word that he would be over as soon as a horse could bring him. As we were parting Schenck said: —

"Gentlemen, I'm afraid there's likely to be trouble for me over this."

"It's quite possible," I said, "that they may arrest you."

"Heaven knows I never thought of killing Serdholm or any other man. But I had a grudge against him, and I wasn't far away when he was killed. The only evidence to clear me is those queer tracks."

"I shall follow those until they lead me somewhere," said I, "and I do not myself believe, Schenck, that you had any part in the thing."

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"Thank you," said the guard. "Good-night."

Professor Ravenden turned to me as we entered the house.

"Pardon a natural curiosity. Did I understand that there were prints on the sand which might be potentially indicative?"

"Professor Ravenden," said I, "there is an inexplicable feature to this case. If you'll come up to my room I should very much like to draw on your fund of natural history."

When we were comfortably settled I began.

"Would it be possible for a wandering ostrich or other huge bird, escaped from some zoo, to have made its home here?"

"Scientifically quite possible. May I inquire the purpose of this? Can it be that the tracks referred to by the guard were the cloven hoof-prints of ——"

"Cloven hoofs!" I cried, in sharp disappointment. "Is there no member of the ostrich family that has claws?"

"None now extant. In the processes of evolution the claws of the ostrich, like its wings, have gradually ——"

"Is there any huge-clawed bird large enough and powerful enough to kill a man with a blow of its beak?"

"No, sir," said the Professor. "I know of no bird which would venture to attack man except the ostrich, emu, or cassowary, and the fighting weapon of this family is the hoof, not the beak. But you will again pardon me if I ask ——"

"Professor Ravenden, the only thing that approached Serdholm within striking distance walked on a foot armed with five great claws." I rapidly sketched on a sheet of paper a rough, but careful, drawing. "And there's its sign-manual," I added, pushing it towards him.

Imagination could hardly picture a more precise, unemotional, and conventionally scientific man than Professor Ravenden. Yet at sight of the paper his eyes sparkled, he half started from his chair, a flush rose in his cheeks, he looked briskly and keenly from the sketch to me, and spoke in a voice that rang with a deep under-thrill of excitement.

"Are you sure, Mr. Haynes — are you quite sure that this is substantially correct?"

"Minor details may be inexact. In all essentials that will correspond to the marks made by a thing that walked from the mouth of the gully to the spot where we found the body, and back again."

Before I had fairly finished the Professor was out of the room. He returned almost immediately with

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a flat slab of considerable weight. This he laid on the table, and taking my drawing sedulously compared it with an impression, deep-sunken into the slab. For me a single glance was enough. That impression, stamped as it was on my brain, I would have identified as far as the eye could see it.

"That's it," I cried, with the eagerness of triumphant discovery. "The bird from whose foot that cast was made is the thing that killed Serdholm."

"Mr. Haynes," said the entomologist, drily, "this is not a cast."

"Not a cast?" I said, in bewilderment. "What is it, then?"

"It is a rock of the Cretaceous period."

"A rock?" I repeated, dully. "Of what period?"

"The Cretaceous. The creature whose footprint you see there trod that rock when it was soft ooze. That may have been one hundred million years ago. It was at least ten million."

I looked again at the rock, and strange-emotions stirred among the roots of my hair.

"Where did you find it?" I asked.

"It formed a part of Mr. Stratton's stone fence. Probably he picked it up in his pasture yonder. The maker of the mark inhabited the island where we now are — this land was then distinct from Long Island — in the incalculably ancient ages."

"What did this bird thing call itself?" I demanded.

"It was not a bird. It was a reptile. Science knows it as the Pteranodon."

"Could it kill a man with its beak?"

"The first man came millions of years later — or so science thinks," said the Professor. "However, primeval man, unarmed, would have fallen an easy prey to so formidable a brute as this. The Pteranodon was a creature of prey," he continued, with an attempt at pedantry which was obviously a ruse to conquer his own excitement. "From what we can reconstruct, a reptile stands forth spreading more than twenty feet of bat-like wings, and bearing a four-foot beak as terrible as a bayonet. This monster was the undisputed lord of the air; as dreadful as his cousins of the earth, the Dinosaurs, whose very name carries the significance of terror."

"And you mean to tell me that this billion-years-dead flying swordfish has flitted out of the darkness of eternity to kill a miserable coast-guard within a hundred miles of New York in the year 1902?" I cried. He had told me nothing of the sort. I didn't want to be told anything of the sort. I wanted reas-

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suring. But I was long past weighing words.

"I have not said so," replied the entomologist, quickly. "But if your diagram is correct, Mr. Haynes — if it is reasonably accurate — I can tell you that no living bird ever made the print which it reproduces, that science knows no five-toed bird and no bird whatsoever of sufficiently formidable beak to kill a man. Furthermore, that the one creature known to science which could make that print, and could slay man or a creature far more powerful than man, is the tiger of the air, the Pteranodon. Probably, however, your natural excitement, due to the distressing circumstances, has led you into error, and your diagram is inaccurate."

"Will you come with me and see?" I demanded.

"Willingly. I shall have to ask your help, however, with the rock."

We got a light, for it was now very dark, and, taking turns with the lantern and the Cretaceous slab (which hadn't lost any weight with age, by the way), we went direct to the shore and turned westward. Presently a light appeared around the face of the cliff and Colton hailed us. He was on his way back to Third House, but, of course, joined us in our excursion.

I hastily explained to him the matter of the footprints, the diagram, and the fossil marks. "Professor Ravenden would have us believe that Serdholm was killed by a beaked ghoul that lived a hundred million years ago."

"I'll tell you one thing," said Colton, gravely. "He wasn't killed by a bullet. It was a stab wound — a broad-bladed knife or something of that sort, but driven with terrific power. The post-mortem settled that. You lose your bet, Haynes. Why," he cried, suddenly, "if you come to that it wasn't unlike what a heavy, sharp beak would make. But — but — this Pteranodon — is that it? Oh, the deuce! I thought all those Pterano-things were dead and buried before Adam's great-grandfather was a protoplasm."

"Science has assumed that they were extinct," said the Professor. "But a scientific assumption is a mere makeshift, useful only until it is overthrown by new facts. We have prehistoric survivals — the gar of our rivers is unchanged from his ancestors of fifteen million years ago. The creature of the water has endured; why not the creature of the air?"

"Oh, come off," said Colton, seriously. "Where could it live and not have been discovered?"

"Perhaps at the North or South Pole," said the Professor. "Perhaps

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in the depths of unexplored islands. Or possibly inside the globe. Geographers are accustomed to say loosely that the earth is an open book. Setting aside the exceptions which I have noted, there still remains the interior, as unknown and mysterious as the planets. In its possible vast caverns there may well be reproduced the conditions in which the Pteranodon and its terrific contemporaries found their suitable environment on the earth's surface ages ago."

"Then how would it get out?"

"The violent volcanic disturbances of this summer might have opened an exit. However, I am merely defending the Pteranodon's survival as an interesting possibility. My own belief is that your diagram, Mr. Haynes, is faulty."

"Hold the light here, then," I said, laying down the slab, for we were now at the spot. "I will convince you as to that."

While the Professor held the light I uncovered one of the tracks. A quick exclamation escaped him. He fell on his knees beside the print, and as he compared the today's mark on the sand with the rock print of millions of years ago his breath came hard. When he lifted his head his face was twitching nervously, but his voice was steady.

"I have to ask your pardon, Mr. Haynes," he said. "Your drawing was faithful. The marks are the same."

"But what in Heaven's name does it mean?" cried Colton.

"It means that we are on the verge of the most important discovery of modern times," said the Professor. "Savants have hitherto scouted the suggestions to be deduced from the persistent legend of the roc, and from certain almost universal North American Indian lore, notwithstanding that the theory of some monstrous winged creature widely different from any recognised existing forms is supported by more convincing proofs. In the North of England, in 1844, reputable witnesses found the tracks, after a night's fall of snow, of a creature with a pendent tail, which made flights over houses and other obstructions, leaving a trail much like this before us. There are other corroborative instances of a similar nature. In view of the present evidence I would say that this was unquestionably a Pteranodon, or a descendant little altered, and a very large specimen, as the tracks are distinctly larger than the fossil prints. Gentlemen, I congratulate you both on your part in so epoch-making a discovery."

"Do you expect a sane man to believe this thing?" I demanded.

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"That's what I feel," said Colton. "But, on your own showing of the evidence, what else is there to believe?"

"But see here," I expostulated, all the time feeling as if I were arguing in and against a dream. "If this is a *flying* creature, how explain the footprints leading up to Serdholm's body as well as away from it?"

"Owing to its structure," said the Professor, "the Pteranodon could not rapidly rise from the ground in flight. It either sought an acclivity from which to launch itself or ran swiftly along the ground, gathering impetus for a leap into the air with outspread wings. Similarly, in alighting, it probably ran along on its hind feet before coming to a halt. Now, suppose the Pteranodon to be on the cliff's edge, about to start upon its evening flight. Below it appears a man. Its ferocious nature is aroused. Down it swoops, skims swiftly with pattering feet toward him, impales him on its dreadful beak, then returns to climb the cliff and again launch itself for flight."

"If the shore was covered with these footprints," I said vehemently, "I wouldn't believe it. It's too ——"

I never finished that sentence. From out of the darkness there came a hoarse cry. Heavy wings beat the air with swift strokes. In that instant panic seized me. I ran for the shelter of the cliff, and after me came Colton. Only the Professor stood his ground, but it was with a tremulous voice that he called to us: —

"That was a common marsh or short-eared owl that arose; the Asio acciptrinus is not rare hereabouts. There is nothing further to do tonight, and I believe that we are in some peril in remaining here, as the Pteranodon appears to be nocturnal."

We returned to him ashamed. But all the way home, despite my better sense, I walked under an obsession of terror hovering in the blackness above.

So here is the case as clearly as I can put it. I shall have time to work it out unhampered, as the remoteness of the place is a safeguard so far as news is concerned, and only we three know of the Pteranodon prints.

It seems like a nightmare — formless, meaningless. What you will think of it I can only conjecture. But you must not think that I have lost my senses. I am sane enough; so is Colton; so, to all appearances, is Professor Ravenden. The facts are exactly as I have written them down. I have left no clue untouched thus far. I will stake my life on the

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absence of footprints. And it all comes down to this, Mr. Clare: Pteranodon or no Pteranodon, as sure as my name is Haynes, the thing that killed Paul Serdholm never walked on human feet. — Very sincerely yours,

HARRIS D. HAYNES.

DOCUMENT No. 2. — Extract from letter written by Stanford Colton to his father, John Colton, Esq., of New York City. Date, September 21st, 4 p.m.

So there, my dear dad, is the case against the Pteranodon. To your hard business sense it will seem a thing for laughter. You wouldn't put a cent in Pteranodon stock on the word of an idealistic, scientific theorist like old Ravenden, backed by a few queer marks on a beach. Very well, neither would I. All the same, I ducked and ran when the owl flapped out from the cliff. And I wonder if you wouldn't have been dragging us to shelter yourself if you had been there.

At six o'clock this morning Haynes woke me out of a troubled dream by walking along the hall.

"Is that you, Haynes?" I called.

"Yes," he said. "I'm off for the beach."

"Wait fifteen minutes and I'll go with you," I suggested.

"If you don't mind, Colton, I'd rather you wouldn't. I want to go over the ground alone first. A good night's rest has scared the Professor's Cretaceous jub-jub bird out of my mental premises."

I was now up and at the door.

"Well, good luck!" I said and for some reason I reached out and shook hands with him.

He looked rather surprised — perhaps just a bit startled — but he only said, "See you in a couple of hours."

Sleep was not for me after that. I tried it, but it was no go. The Stratton family almost expired of amazement when I showed up for seven o'clock breakfast. Half an hour later I was on the way to find Haynes. I went direct down the beach. Haynes had gone this way before me, as I saw by his tracks. It was a dead-and-alive sort of morning — grey, with a mist that seemed to smother sound as well as sight. I went forward with damped spirits and little heart in the enterprise. As I came to the turn of the cliff that opens up the view down the shore I halloaed for Haynes. No reply came. Again I shouted, and this time, as my call drew no answer, I confess that a clammy feeling of loneliness hastened my steps. I rounded the cliff at a good pace and saw ahead what checked me like a blow.

Almost at the spot where we had found Serdholm a man lay sprawled

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grotesquely. Though the face was hidden and the posture distorted, I knew him instantly for Haynes, and as instantly knew that he was dead. I went forward to the body, sickening at every step.

Haynes had been struck opposite the gully. The weapon that killed him had been driven with fearful impetus between his ribs, from the back. A dozen staggering prints showed where he had plunged forward before he fell. The heart was touched, and he must have been dead almost on the stroke. His flight was involuntary — the blind, mechanical instinct of escape from death. To one who had seen its like before there was no mistaking that great gash in his back. Haynes had been killed as Serdholm was. But for what cause? What possible motive of murder could embrace those two who had never known or so much as spoken to each other? No; it was motiveless: the act of a thing without mind, inspired by no motive but the blood-thirst, the passion of slaughter. At that the picture of the Pteranodon, as the Professor had drawn it, took hold of my mind. I ran to the point whence Haynes had staggered. Beginning there, in double line over the clean sand, stretched the grisly track of the talons. *Except for them the sand was untouched.*

Of the formalities that succeeded there is no need to speak; but following what I thought Haynes's method would have been, I investigated the movements of Schenck, the coast-guard, that morning. From six o'clock till eight he was at the station. His alibi is perfect. In the killing of poor Haynes he had no part. That being proved sufficiently establishes his innocence of the Serdholm crime. Both were done by the same murderer.

Professor Ravenden is now fixed in his belief that the Pteranodon, or some little-altered descendant, did the murders. I am struggling not to believe it, yet it lies at the back of all my surmises as a hideous probability. One thing I know, that nothing would tempt me alone upon that beach tonight. Tomorrow morning I shall load my Colt and go down there with the Professor, who is a game old theorist, and can be counted on to see this through. He is sketching out, this afternoon, a monograph on the survival of the Pteranodon. It will make a stir in the scientific world. Don't be worried about my part in this. I'll be cautious to-morrow. No other news to tell; nothing but this counts.

Your affectionate son,

STANFORD.

DOCUMENT No. 3. — Statement by Stanford Colton regarding his part in the

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events of the morning of September 22nd, 1902.

On the morning of the day after the killing of Harris Haynes I went to the beach opposite Stony Gully. It was seven o'clock when I reached the point where the bodies were found. Professor Ravenden was to have accompanied me. He had started out while I was at breakfast, however, through a misunderstanding as to time. His route was a roundabout one, bringing him to the spot after my arrival, as will appear in his report. I went directly down the shore. In my belt was a forty-five-calibre revolver.

As I came opposite Stony Gully I carefully examined the sand. The five-taloned tracks were in several places almost as distinct as on the previous day. Fortunately, owing to the scanty population and the slow transmission of news, there had been very few visitors to the scene, and those few had been careful in their movements, so the evidence was not trodden out.

For a closer examination I got down on my hands and knees above one of the tracks. There was the secret, if I could but read it. The mark was in all respects the counterpart of the sketch made by Haynes, and of the impress on the Cretaceous rock of Professor Ravenden. I might have been in that posture two or three minutes, my mind immersed in conjecture. Then I rose, and as I stood and looked down there suddenly flashed into my brain the solution. I started forward to the next mark, and as I advanced something sang in the air behind me. I knew it was some swiftly flying thing; knew in the same agonizing moment that I was doomed; tried to face my death; and then there was a dreadful, grinding shock, a flame tore through my brain, and I fell forward into darkness.

DOCUMENT No. 4. — The explanation by Professor Willis Ravenden, F.R.S., etc., of the events of September 20th, 21st, and 22nd, 1902, surrounding the deaths of Paul Serdholm and Harris Haynes and the striking down of Stanford Colton.

Upon the death of my esteemed young friend, Mr. Haynes, I made minute examination of the vestigia near the body. These were obviously the footprints of the same creature that killed Serdholm, the coast-guard. Not only the measurements and depth of indentation, but the intervals corresponded exactly to those observed in the first investigation. The non-existence of any known five-toed birds drove me to consideration of other winged creatures, and certainly none may say that, with the evidence on hand, my hypothesis of the survival and reap-

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pearance of the Pteranodon was not justified.

Having concluded my examination into the circumstances of Mr. Haynes's death, I returned to Third House and set about embodying the remarkable events in a monograph. In this work I employed the entire afternoon and evening, with the exception of an inconsiderable space devoted to a letter which it seemed proper to write to the afflicted family of Mr. Haynes, and in which I suggested for their comfort the fact that he met his death in the noble cause of scientific investigation. In pursuance of an understanding with Mr. Colton, he and I were to have visited, early on the following morning, the scene of the tragedies. By a misconception of the plan I set out before he left, thinking that he had already gone. My purpose was to proceed to the spot along the cliffs instead of by the beach, this route affording a more favourable view, though an intermittent one, as it presents a succession of smoothly rolling hillocks. Hardly had I left the house when the disturbance of the grasses incidental to my passage put to flight a fine specimen of the Lycaena pseudargiolus, whose variations I have been investigating. I had, of course, taken my net with me, partly, indeed, as a weapon of defence, as the butt is readily detachable and heavily loaded.

In the light of subsequent events I must confess my culpability in allowing even so absorbing an interest as this that suddenly beset my path to turn me from my engagement to meet Mr. Colton. Instinctively, however, I pursued the insect. Although this species, as is well known, exhibits a power of sustained flight possessed by none other of the lepidopteræ of corresponding wing area, I hoped that, owing to the chill morning air, this specimen would be readily captured. Provokingly it alighted at short intervals, but on each occasion rose again as I was almost within reach. Thus lured on I described a half-circle and was, approximately, a third of a mile inland when finally I netted my prey on the leaves of a Quercus ilicifolia. Having deposited it in the poison jar which I carried on a shoulder-strap, I made haste, not without some quickenings of self-reproach, toward the cliff. Incentive to greater haste was furnished by a fog-bank that was approaching from the south. Heading directly for the nearest point of the cliff, I reached it before the fog arrived. The first object that caught my eyes, as it ranged for the readiest access to the beach, was the outstretched body of Colton lying upon the hard sand where

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Serdholm and Haynes had met their deaths.

For the moment I was stunned into inaction. Then came the sense of my own guilt and responsibility. Along the cliff I ran at full speed, dipped down into a hollow, where, for the time, the beach was shut off from view, and surmounted the hill beyond, which brought me almost above the body a little to the east of the gully. The fog, too, had been advancing swiftly, and now as I reached the cliff's edge it spread a grey mantle over the body lying there alone. Already I had reached the head of the gully, when there moved very slowly out upon the hard sand a thing so out of all conception, an apparition so monstrous to the sight, that my net fell from my hand and a loud cry burst from me. In the grey folds of mist it wavered, assuming shapes beyond comprehension. Suddenly it doubled on itself, contracted to a compact mass, underwent a strange inversion, and before my clearing vision there arose a man, dreadful of aspect indeed, but still a human being, and, as such, not beyond human powers to cope with. Coincident with this recognition I noted a knife, inordinately long of blade and bulky of handle, on the sand almost under Colton. Toward this the man had been moving when my cry arrested him, and now he stood facing the height with strained eye and gnashing teeth.

There was no time for delay. The facile descent of the gully was out of the question. It was over the cliff or nothing; for if Colton was alive his only chance was that I should reach his assailant before the latter could come at the knife. Upon the flash of the thought I was in mid-air, a giddy terror dulling my brain as I plunged down through the fog. Fortunately for me — for the bones of sixty years are brittle — I landed upon a slope of soft sand. Forward I pitched, threw myself completely over, and, carried to my feet by the impetus, ran down the lesser slope upon the man. That he was obsessed by a mania of murder was written on his face and in his eyes. But now his expression, as he turned toward me, was that of a beast alarmed. To hold his attention I shouted. The one desideratum was to reach him before he turned again to the knife and Colton.

The maniac crouched as I ran in upon him, and I must confess to a certain savage exultation as I noted that he had little the advantage of me in size or weight. Although not a large man, I may say that I am of wiry frame, which my out-of-door life has kept in condition. So I felt no great misgivings as to the out-

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come. We closed. As my opponent's muscles tightened on mine I knew, with a sudden, daunting shock, that I had met the strength of fury. For a moment we strained, I striving for a hold which would enable me to lift him from his feet. Then with a rabid scream the creature dashed his face into my shoulder and bit through shirt and flesh until I felt the teeth grate on my shoulder-blade.

Not improbably this saved my life and Colton's. For, upon the outrage of that assault, a fury not less insane than that of my enemy fired me, and I, who have ever practised a certain scientific austerity of emotional life, became a raging beast. Power flashed through every vein; strength distended every muscle. Clutching at the throat of my assailant I tore that hideous face from my shoulder. My right hand, drawn back for a blow, twitched the cord of my heavy poison bottle. Shouting aloud I swung the formidable weapon up and brought it down upon his head with repeated blows. His grasp relaxed. I sprang back for a fuller swing and beat him to the ground. The jar was shattered, but such was my ecstasy of murderousness that I forgot the specimen of pseudargiolus, which fell with the fragments and was trodden into the sand.

In my hand I still held the base of the jar. My head was whirling. I staggered backward, and with just sense enough left to know that the deadly fumes of the cyanide were doing their work flung it far away. A mist fell like a curtain somewhere between my eyes and my brain, befogging the processes of thought.

The next thing I knew, I was lying on my back, looking into a white face — Colton's! I must have been saying something, for Colton replied, as if to a question: —

"It's all right, Professor. There's no pseudargiolus or Pteranodon, or anything. Just lie quiet for a moment."

But it was borne in upon me that I had lost my prize. "Let me up!" I cried. "I've lost it — it fell when the poison jar broke."

"There, there," he said, soothingly, as one calms a delirious person. "Just wait ——"

"I'm speaking of my specimen, the pseudargiolus." The mist was beginning to lift from my brain, and the mind now swung dizzily back to the great speculation. "The Pteranodon?" I gasped, looking about me.

"There!" Colton laughed shakily as he pointed to the blood-besmeared form lying quiet on the sand.

"But the footprints! The fossil marks on the rock!"

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"Footprints on the rock? Handprints here."

"*Handprints!*" I repeated. "Tell me slowly. I must confess to a degree of bewilderment to which I am not accustomed."

"No wonder, sir. Here it is. I saw it all just before I was hit. This man is Serdholm's cousin, the juggler. He's crazy, probably from Serdholm's blow. He's evidently been waiting for a chance to kill Serdholm. The gully's mouth is where he waited. You've seen circus-jugglers throw knives — well, that's the way he killed Serdholm. In his crazy cunning he saw that footprints would give him away, so he utilized another of his circus tricks and recovered the knife by walking on his hands. His handprints are what we mistook for the footprints of a giant, prehistoric bird!

"But Mr. Haynes? And yourself?"

"I don't know why he wanted to kill us, unless he feared we would discover his secret. I escaped because I was going forward as he threw, and that must have disturbed his aim so that the knife turned in the air and the handle struck me, knocking me senseless."

Here the juggler groaned, and we busied ourselves with bringing him to.

My monograph on the Pteranodon, it is hardly needful to state, will not be published. At the same time I maintain that the survival of this formidable creature, while now lacking definite proof, is none the less strictly within the limits of scientific possibility. . . .

WILLIS RAVENDEN.

STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, CIRCULATION, ETC., REQUIRED BY THE ACTS OF CONGRESS OF AUGUST 24, 1912, AND MARCH 3, 1933

of *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, published bimonthly at Concord, N. H., for October 1, 1943

State of New York, County of New York, ss. Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared Joseph W. Ferman, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Business Manager of *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, as amended by the Act of March 3, 1933, embodied in section 411, Postal Laws and Regulations, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business manager are: *Publisher*, Lawrence E. Spivak, 570 Lexington Ave., New York; *Editor*, Ellery Queen, 570 Lexington Ave., New York; *Managing Editor*, Mildred Falk, 570 Lexington Ave., New York; *Business Manager*, Joseph W. Ferman, 570 Lexington Ave., New York.

2. That the owners are: The American Mercury, Inc.; Lawrence E. Spivak, 570 Lexington Ave., N. Y.; Joseph W. Ferman, 570 Lexington Ave., N. Y.; Eugene Lyons, 570 Lexington Ave., N. Y.; Mildred Falk, 570 Lexington Ave., N. Y.

3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: None.

4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him.

J. W. Ferman, *Business Manager.*

Sworn to and subscribed before me, this 7th day of September, 1943.

[Seal] Gertrude J. Huebner, *Notary Public.*
(My commission expires March 30, 1944.)

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Writers and readers, experts and tyros, will find Mrs. Marie F. Rodell's recent textbook, MYSTERY FICTION: Theory and Technique, *a highly stimulating and informative study of the detective, mystery, and horror story. Mrs. Rodell is no ivory-tower analyst: she is the detective-story editor of the New York publishing firm of Duell, Sloan and Pearce, and has written three fine detective novels under the pen-name of Marion Randolph.*

On page 96 of her textbook, in a chapter on "Taboos," Mrs. Rodell says: "Curare has lost its magic." By and large Mrs. Rodell is right, as no one can deny. But even the most hackneyed material is capable of fresh manipulation. In "Death in the Dog House" that old standby of the thriller-writers — the much abused curare — is dealt with openly and without subterfuge; yet, unless your Editor is greatly mistaken, most of you will not be familiar with the author's new wrinkle on an old chestnut.

This story has an up-to-the-minute background: the overcrowded taproom of a Washington, D. C. café, with all the frantic, frenzied atmosphere of our national capital in war time.

This is Mr. Tilghman's first detective story — more power to him! — and is here published for the first time anywhere.

DEATH IN THE DOG HOUSE

by CORNELIUS A. TILGHMAN

WHEN Captain Terry McNicholas, of the Army Intelligence, shoved Janice Lerbach and himself into the crowded Dog House, he did not expect to rub shoulders with a corpse.

The small taproom was stuffy with the smells of cigarette smoke, alcohol, and perfumes. From a radio snatches of dance music bounced above the tight buzz of conversation. Sharp screams of laughter sliced into the other noises.

Two hundred persons crammed the narrow room. Most of these were women, young women. For the Dog House was in Washington, D. C., on Massachusetts Avenue.

Elbow to elbow at the close-packed tables, a hundred human beings talked and drank cocktails, or talked and, with experienced patience, waited to drink cocktails. The majority were in street clothes, although a dozen, looking like crushed flowers, wore bright-colored cocktail gowns. A group of stiff-backed WAVES and WACS sat around three tables which they had pushed together. Jammed at a table in the corner, two women ambulance drivers struggled to get out.

Another hundred persons, wedged before the short bar, complained or

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fought good-naturedly to attract the attention of one of the three harassed women bartenders. Of the twenty men caught in this den of femininity, eleven wore uniforms.

"If anybody ever again mentions the Black Hole of Calcutta to me," Terry McNicholas yelled in Janice's ear, as they battled toward the corner which the ambulance drivers were leaving, "or says anything about being packed in like sardines, I'm going to bring 'em here and show 'em what it's really like."

Her hand tightened on his arm. "We'll grab a cocktail and go some place for an early dinner," she suggested. A smile lit up her eyes. Through the smoke haze they shone like the polished buttons on a dress uniform in the sunlight.

"Wherever we go," he grumbled, "it'll be crowded. Couldn't we go to your home after dinner? Where we could breathe without bumping somebody."

For eight weeks he'd been trying to get her alone long enough to explain how much she could increase his ration of happiness. And now — after he'd spent a week helping to prosecute Schurz, who'd been trapped by Chief Clerk Dexter of the Army Ordnance — she wanted to squander the precious minutes in places less private and much more crowded than a goldfish bowl.

"Get the drinks," she evaded. "I'll hold half this table for us. Hurry, or we'll never get out of here."

Step by step, he shouldered into the mob before the bar. The place was so dimly lighted that he could barely make out the time from the wall clock above the mirror. Ten minutes to five. Stefan Schurz would be executed in ten minutes. The plans of the new heavyweight torpedo would never reach the Germans — thanks to the alertness of Willard Dexter.

A surge from behind crushed against Terry. From their voices, they were men — three of them — in a celebrating mood. Indistinctly the mirror verified this. Two women got their orders and scrambled out of the swarm. The crowd pressed forward, pushing Terry a foot nearer the busy lady bartenders.

Behind him one of the happy threesome twitched violently. "What the hell!" he cried. In the looking-glass Terry could see a slice of his cheek and one ear.

"'Smatter?" another male voice asked.

"Something bit me," explained the first voice.

"Musta been one a those purple snakes you'll be seein' tomorrow," the second voice stated in a strange snapping, crackling tone.

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The crowd was compressed into a solid mass. The warm breath of the man behind tickled the short hairs on Terry's neck. Another half-step forward. At his side, in a blue tailored suit, a light-haired girl smiled up at him. He grinned at her. Together they advanced six inches. Only a stout woman in a too tight red dress now separated Terry from the bar.

He no longer felt the warm breath on the nape of his neck. But the fellow leaned on him. The stout woman got her drinks and started to barge out. He edged into the space she had vacated. The man behind slumped heavily on Terry's back.

He turned to protest. The man slid off him and fell forward. With a dull thump, his head struck the bar. His body crumpled to the floor. The blonde in the blue suit screamed. Silence, starting from that spot, spread in widening circles back through the crowd.

"Back up," Terry shouted. "Back up. A man's sick here." In the whispering quiet, the shuffling of feet and the radio's blare sounded thunderous. Terry stooped and turned the man over. It was Chief Clerk Willard Dexter. He was dead.

Back of the bar, one of the women in white snapped off the radio. The silence reached out to the corners of the room. As Terry bent over the corpse of the man who had been responsible for the conviction of Stefan Schurz, the clock on the wall chimed five times. The two men had died simultaneously. That was queer.

Where Dexter's forehead had struck the bar, a welt reddened. An ashy grayness about the open mouth made the lips appear thick and unnatural. He looked as if he'd suffocated. But how? He was too tall to have been smothered in the crowd. It didn't make sense that he'd meekly let someone choke off his breath. Moreover, the skin of his neck showed no signs of his having been strangled.

What it was he had no idea, but Terry was sure that something was out of focus in this grotesque picture. For a robust young man, like Dexter, just didn't stop breathing and fall over dead. And could it be a coincidence that his death had occurred at the instant Schurz was being executed? But, if there was a murderer, how could he have killed while surrounded by potential witnesses?

"How is he?" The voice had a crackling quality, like the sound of electric sparks. Terry recognized it as the voice of the man who had made the remark about purple snakes. He was short and heavy-set, with coal-black hair and a large sullen face. Beside him stood a 2nd lieutenant. Something about the lieutenant — Terry thought it a foolish

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idea at the time — suggested Janice.

Tentatively a full alto voice suggested, "I have some smelling salts, if ——"

Over his shoulder, Terry saw a tall brunette, fumbling in a black cloth handbag. Straight as a sword, she was sheathed in a black dress which followed with a frank caress each curve of her figure. He shook his head and murmured, "I'm afraid he's dead."

"Good Lord!" exclaimed the lieutenant. The heavy-set man said nothing.

Across the room he caught a glimpse of Janice, staring with frightened fascination over his head. The people packed against the walls stirred nervously. A rustle of whispering spattered about the room. Terry leaned over the corpse. He found nothing, except a tiny circular piece of cardboard on the back of Dexter's right hand.

The thin black disc was less than a quarter of an inch in diameter. It was stuck lightly to the skin. When Terry removed it, he saw in its center a minute hole. A single drop of blood had caused it to adhere to Dexter's hand. Terry took an envelope from his pocket and dropped the disc into it. Then he stood up.

To the four Army officers near the entrance, he called, "Will two of you gentlemen guard the back door and two the front? See that no one enters or leaves." Again he got a glimpse of Janice staring over his shoulder. He swung around.

"Anything I can do?" asked the 2nd lieutenant. This time Terry saw why he reminded him of Janice — he had the same tilt to his nose and his eyes were the same bluish-gray.

"Telephone the police," Terry ordered. "Tell 'em to bring a doctor."

While six policemen jotted down the name and address of everyone in the tavern, a bald police surgeon examined the corpse and Detective Sergeant Locke questioned Terry.

"So all you know is you hear this guy say something bit him, he falls against you, and you find this disc on his hand?" Locke summed up.

"It seems queer he'd die the same time as Schurz," Terry reminded him. Yet, when he put it in words, it didn't seem to mean anything.

"Humph," grunted Locke. "Whatcha find, Doc?"

In a clipped monotone, words dripped from the police surgeon's lips. "Bird's dead. Paralysis of respiratory motor nerves. Suffocated. Small puncture in back of right hand. Trace of what appears to be curare."

"What's curare?" asked Locke.

"Alkaloid. Poison."

"Could it have killed him?"

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The doctor nodded. "Little in blood stream and death's almost instantaneous."

"Does it look like murder?" Locke persisted.

"Or suicide. Not natural death."

Locke gazed pointedly at the police surgeon. "Then if he was done in, it musta been a minute or two before he collapsed?"

"Right. Anything else?"

"I guess that's all." An ambulance crew removed the body. The police surgeon left with them.

Relieving the Army officers, Locke posted a police guard at each entrance. He called the other four policemen into the small office at the rear and closed the door. In less than a minute they all came out.

Systematically they weeded out those who had not been in Dexter's immediate vicinity within a few minutes of his death. These they permitted to leave. Soon less than fifty persons remained. Terry noted that Janice was the only one left sitting at a table.

Locke beckoned to the heavy-set man with the sullen face. "What's your name?"

The man's voice crackled. "Simon Stanley."

"You came here with Dexter?"

"Yes."

"Where you live?"

"722 Thirteenth Street." Stanley answered as fast as Locke could fire questions.

"That's Dexter's address," Locke stated.

"That's right."

"How long you known him?"

"About three months."

"How'd you get acquainted?"

"We both lived at the same rooming-house," Stanley answered. "The landlady introduced us."

"Whatcha do?"

"I'm a research chemist."

Locke regarded him thoughtfully. "Being a chemist you'd know curare," he stated.

"In a general way," Stanley admitted. "Vegetable poisons are not my line."

"Know why anyone'd want to bump Dexter off?"

"No."

"What sorta guy was he?"

"I liked him. He was intelligent and good company."

"What were you doing here tonight?"

"He was to be married end of this week," Stanley explained. "We were having a farewell party."

"Humph," commented Locke. "Got your draft registration certificate?"

"Here it is."

"Okay," said Locke, returning the registration card. "Stick around."

A vague notion in the back of

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Terry's mind insisted that something in this riddle ought to add up to four. But the necessary two and two eluded him. He tried to force his brain to concentrate. *Schurz's execution. The crowd around Dexter. The small disc. Curare.* They fell together in a meaningless tangle. The more he tried to make them fit together in a distinct pattern, the more confused they became. He heard Locke barking at the 2nd lieutenant.

"Max Lerbach," the young man answered. Involuntarily Terry's eyes sought Janice. Tense, leaning forward, her attention on the lieutenant and Locke, she was not aware of his gaze.

"Address?" snapped Locke.

"My home is at 109 Fessenden Street."

That's Janice's address, thought Terry.

"How long you known Dexter?"

Lerbach's voice was low. "I met him yesterday."

"Huh?" Locke spoke as if he hadn't heard clearly.

A flush of blood colored Lerbach's cheeks. "I met him for the first time yesterday. I just got back from Panama," he added.

"Know what curare is?"

"Isn't that the stuff the Indians of Brazil use to poison their arrows?"

"How'd you happen to meet Dexter yesterday?" Locke emphasized the last word.

Max hesitated. "I just happened to run into him at a friend's." He continued quickly, "He invited me to join him and Stanley in a little celebration tonight."

"Who was the friend?"

"People named Kruger."

"Full name and address," snapped Locke.

Again Lerbach hesitated. "They haven't got anything to do with this."

"Tell him, Max," Janice urged. Locke looked across the room at her.

"Who're you?" he asked.

Janice nodded toward Max. "His sister."

"Humph." Locke shifted his gaze again to Lerbach. "Well?" he prodded.

"Miss Hester Kruger, 407 Albemarle Street." Although Max Lerbach had not moved, he looked as if he had just snapped to attention.

"Who's she?" Locke kept digging.

"She's the girl Dexter was going to marry."

"A friend of yours, huh?"

"We've known each other for several years."

"Dexter, Stanley and you came in here a few minutes before five?"

"That's right."

"Then what'd you do?" Locke asked.

"Tried to get to the bar."

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"Three abreast?"

"Yes. Stanley, Dexter, and I."

"Dexter was in the middle?"

"Yes."

"Who was on his right?"

"I was."

"Mind being searched?"

"Good heavens, man," Lerbach burst out, "you don't think that I ——"

"Mind being searched?" Locke repeated, watching him closely.

This time Max answered quietly. "No. Certainly not."

"Durkin!" Locke called. One of the policemen stepped up. Locke whispered to him. Then aloud he directed, "Take him in the office."

Locke addressed the whole group. "We can save a lotta time, if you people cooperate. Did anybody see anything suspicious?" Absolute silence greeted this question. "Okay," he growled, "we'll have to do it the hard way." He nodded at Janice. "You, come here. What's the dope on this brother of yours and this Kruger dame?"

"He just told you," she replied stiffly.

"I mean was he sweet on her? Were they engaged or anything before Dexter cut him out?"

"No engagement between Hester and Max was ever announced," Janice answered.

"But they had an understanding before he went off to Panama, didn't they?" coaxed Locke.

"You'll have to ask my brother."

"That's all," he dismissed her abruptly.

Next he called the blonde in the blue suit. Her name was Edna Colvin, and she lived in Brentwood. She had neither heard nor seen anything which might be connected with Dexter's death. "Where were you standing at the time?" Locke asked.

"Beside him." She indicated Terry. "And in front of him." She nodded toward Stanley.

"You didn't even know that a man behind you jumped and said, 'What the hell!' — didja?" Locke suggested sarcastically.

She gazed up at him with big innocent eyes. "Oh, yes, but I didn't think anything of it."

"Suppose you sit over there for a while," Locke said, "and try and see if you *can* think something of it."

Durkin returned with Max Lerbach. "Nothing," he reported to Locke.

With easy familiarity Locke asked Max, "How long you and Miss Kruger been engaged?"

Locke's tone and the unexpectedness of the question took Lerbach off guard. "A year," he answered.

Swiftly Locke followed up. "Didn't

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like it when she told you she was going to marry Dexter?"

"I was surprised," Max admitted. "But," he added, " a lot of things can happen in a year."

"A lot can happen in a minute," Locke threw at him. "So you bumped Dexter off because ——"

"I didn't kill him," Max interrupted angrily.

"Then who did?"

"How would I know?"

"You were on the spot," Locke reminded him. He called Durkin. "Telephone headquarters," he ordered, "and tell 'em to send a man out to Kruger's, 407 Albemarle Street, to check on Max Lerbach. Tell him to stop here first and get the dope. Then you look after the Lieutenant."

The notion in Captain Terry McNicholas's mind that this was not adding up correctly persisted. He was sure that there was something about curare, which, if he could recall, was the key to the whole problem. But he couldn't remember what it was. Janice looked pale and tired. Max was nervous.

In rapid succession, Locke questioned a dozen more of the patrons of the Dog House. Ten of these he permitted to leave. A tall white-haired man, wearing a gray suit, with a long white scar on his left cheek, he instructed to remain. Also he detained a flapperish-looking girl, who had replied to his queries with such vagueness that her answers hardly made sense.

There were now but thirty-seven of the original crowd remaining. The man from headquarters came, got his directions privately from Locke, and left. Max smoked cigarette after cigarette. Janice looked ill. Terry drew little houses on the back of an envelope and tried to recall something that he knew he knew but which would not emerge from the clouded secrecy of his subconsciousness.

Locke called the brunette whose black dress fitted her like a tight sweater. She lived far out on Georgia Avenue. She was Hilda Norton, a widow with a private income.

"Didja know Dexter?" Locke asked.

"No." Her alto voice sang through the room.

"Know anyone here?"

"Not a soul."

"Why'dja come here then?"

The corners of her mouth lifted whimsically. "I don't often take a drink. But I was tired, and when I passed here everyone seemed so gay that I just stopped in. I don't believe I've ever been in here before."

"Didja hear Dexter say something bit him?"

"I heard someone say something

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like that."

"Where were you at the time?"

"Almost behind that gentleman." With a smile she turned toward Stanley.

"I beg your pardon." They all looked at the white-haired man with the scar on his face. He spoke directly to Mrs. Norton. "I was very near you. You were behind the Lieutenant."

"You are mistaken," she said brightly. "I was behind that gentleman." Again she indicated Stanley. "To his left. I remember distinctly; for he stepped on my toe," she added ruefully.

"That's right," offered Stanley, his face expressionless except for its habitual sullenness. "I saw her clearly when I turned to apologize. Since she appears to be the only one in black, I could not possibly be wrong."

"Anybody else got anything to say?" asked Locke. All that query drew was a number of blank stares, although the white-haired man apparently started to speak again and changed his mind.

The telephone rang. One of the policemen took up the receiver and called Locke. "He wants to talk to you, Sergeant."

Locke walked over and took the receiver out of his hand. "Yeah?" he said. Then he listened for some time. His eyes, meanwhile, studied first one and then another of the group in the Dog House. "When was that?" he asked. . . . "Yeah. . . . That was my guess. . . . Okay. . . . Yeah, follow that up and let me know what you get." He left the phone with a pleased gleam in his eyes. He nodded slightly to Durkin, who moved closer to 2nd Lieutenant Max Lerbach.

Terry stopped drawing houses. He saw Janice shiver. Nearby a policeman stood, watching her. Captain McNicholas began to black-out with his pencil all the row of little houses.

Methodically, Locke resumed his questioning. Eight more persons gave their answers, and seven were allowed to go. The one detained was a dark slant-eyed woman of uncertain age but of certain oriental parentage. Nothing in her replies gave Terry any clue why Locke had her stay. He slowly blacked-out another drawing of a house, being particularly careful that no part of a single stroke of his pencil should escape from the building's outline.

The quick staccato ring of the telephone made Max Lerbach flinch, and he dropped his cigarette. "I'll take it," Locke announced. This time his conversation was even briefer than before. "Yeah. . . . Yeah. . . . Nice going."

With a clatter, he dropped the re-

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ceiver in its cradle. He strode over before Max. "Look here, young man," his tone was brisk and hard, "you were engaged to Hester Kruger up until a month ago, when she wrote you, telling you she'd met Dexter and was going to marry him. You wrote and begged her not to. Then you were notified that you had a thirty-day leave before being transferred." He paused, gazing steadily at Lerbach.

"But ——"

"As soon as you got to Washington," Locke cut in, "you went to her house and tried to talk her outa her coming marriage to Dexter. You were about to quarrel when Dexter came in. Your attitude changed. You congratulated him. Became friendly and accepted his invitation to step out with him and Stanley." Locke's voice became sharper. Terry saw Janice staring dumbly at the detective.

"But I didn't want her to make a mistake," protested Lerbach. "After I met him, I liked Dexter. I got the impression that she couldn't have picked a finer man."

"Yeah," said Locke bitterly. "So you fixed a dose of curare, and when you got the chance, you jabbed him with a poisoned needle."

The little muscles in Lerbach's jaws stood out whitely. "But, look here, I ——"

Locke swept on with his third degree. "You come here with him, all sweet and friendly-like. But all the time you're just waitin' your chance to get him outa the way. A friendly smile hiding a black murderous heart!" Locke paused to let his rhetoric sink in. He was pleased with his oratory.

Then the idea, which had been lurking deep back in Terry's mind, came leaping into his consciousness. One of Locke's words had driven it out of hiding. The tangled mess fell together into a pattern.

He dropped his pencil, leaving the last one of the little houses half blacked-out. "Sergeant Locke!" he called.

Locke was annoyed. Just when he was giving this guy the works, this other bird had to cut in and spoil the psychological effect. "What is it?" he roared.

"I've got something to tell you."

"Tell me later."

Terry got between him and Max. "I've got to tell you now, before it's too late."

"Okay, okay," Locke agreed impatiently, now that his scene was completely ruined. "What is it?"

"Back in the office." Terry started toward the cubby-hole in the rear. Locke grunted in disgust and followed. The thirty persons in the taproom looked at them questioningly.

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Terry and Locke were gone for less than ten minutes. Once those outside heard their voices raised in heated debate, but they could not distinguish what they said. Just before they re-appeared, Locke stuck his head out the door and called two of his men. The four of them came out together.

Locke halted before Mrs. Norton. "Let me have your handbag," he ordered.

A light flickered in her eyes. She snapped the bag open, holding it up for his inspection. "Or would you prefer that I dump the contents on a table?" she offered.

"Hand it here."

"What on earth do you want with it?" Her lower lip quivered.

"Gimme that bag."

"But ——"

He grabbed the loop-handle from her wrist.

"You've no right," she protested.

"Be quiet, lady," warned the policeman, who had moved in behind her.

Carefully Locke emptied the bag. Lipstick, smelling salts, package of cigarettes, crumpled handkerchief, folder of matches, pen, pencil, aspirin, finger-nail file, two letters, comb, address book, hairpins, silver vanity case, inside purse with loose change, tiny mirror, and billfold, containing fifteen ten-dollar bills.

"Go easy on the outside," cautioned Terry.

Locke grunted. Inch by inch he examined the black bag's exterior. In a fold near the bottom he found something solid and round — a small black ball. He pulled at it. It came away, followed by a slender black rod an inch and a half long. It was only a straight black-headed pin. But Locke and Terry were excited.

A sixteenth of an inch of the point glistened where it had been filed. Locke fumbled in a pocket, brought out an envelope, took the thin black disc and pushed the filed point of the pin through the small hole in the center. The disc slipped the length of the filed surface and stopped.

"Anything to say, Mrs. Norton?" Locke asked quietly. The whites of her eyes shown largely. Her lower lip trembled violently. She tried to speak, failed, and shook her head. "I arrest you for the murder of Willard Dexter." Locke pronounced the words slowly.

The clock's ticking was sharp and distinct. The woman in black found her voice. "Damn you!" But she wasn't looking at Locke or at Terry.

Locke spoke. "He planned it — suggested the celebration idea to get Dexter and got the curare for you."

The woman in black never shifted her gaze. "Yes," she said.

Stanley stepped forward. The po-

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lice officer at his side grabbed his arm.

"Take 'em away," Locke ordered his squad. They surrounded Mrs. Norton and Stanley. "Captain," Locke said to Terry, "if you ever need a job, I'll be glad to recommend you to the Chief of the Homicide Bureau."

"Let's go, Terry," Janice suggested.

"I came in here for a drink," he announced. "Three old-fashioneds," he called to the bar. "Join us, Max, don't wait for Janice to introduce us."

Second Lieutenant Lerbach grinned. "Yes, sir. But the drinks are on me. How'd you figure it out?"

"Just a lucky guess," Terry assured him. "I remembered that curare is black. Mrs. Norton was the only person dressed in black and carrying a black bag. She was behind you just as the white-haired man said. She had the sharp end of the pin, coated with curare, sticking a little way out of the side of her bag. She jabbed the bag against Dexter's hand. The black disc prevented the point going deep enough to hurt much. Probably hadn't figured on the crowd's keeping her from ducking out or the disc sticking to Dexter's skin.

"From what I know of the Schurz case, she's probably his girl friend and Stanley's the brains." He lifted his glass, drank, and set it down.

Janice smiled at Terry. "Take me home," she pleaded, "where we can breath without bumping into somebody." Although now the Dog House was not the least bit crowded.

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"A Case of Identity"—Number Three in our favorite personality quiz.

GUESS WHO?

by TALBOT C. HATCH

SOMEONE once said that the female of the species is more deadly than the male—an idea that has been bruited about both verbally and in assorted type faces for as long as memory runs with little more actual justification than its rhetorical whimsey. Yet there are instances—well, take this one:

Were it not for a certain prim-looking, equine-visaged spinster of uncertain age and an unbridled propensity for plain old-fashioned snooping, several assorted individuals well might have faced a different fate than the one that befell them. Murderers all, they were yet untouched—even scarce suspected—until this tall and bony nemesis crossed their paths. More deadly than the male? Aye, at least more deadly than all the males of the combined Homicide Divisions of New York and Los Angeles and even the famed C.I.D. of London, for it was she, and not the official sleuths, who recognized the essential clues, and it was her instinctive and canny interpretation of events that led to their final undoing.

More deadly? Again aye, for with no other weapons than an insatiable curiosity, an acidulous yet authoritative tongue, and a black cotton umbrella, she successfully penetrated the veils of mystery surrounding the lives of these malefactors and, one by one, sent them to the electric chair, the lethal chamber, and the hangman.

Today she appears before us as an amateur criminologist of the first rank, yet she actually is little different from the snoopy spinster who stumbled across her first trail of crime a scarce dozen years ago. She was then a funny old maid, with a lean New England face, a Bostonian accent, neatly braided hair, and firm, unrouged lips. She wore a neat blue serge suit, then in its third summer, and her blue-beaded hat rested like the stopper of a bottle on her long and angular frame. Her black cotton umbrella, clutched firmly in her hand, was as much a part of her ensemble as her low oxford shoes.

As she was then, so today. The blue serge suit (presumably a newer model) is as neat and trim as ever, but her hat still resembles a full-rigged ship in a gale and, as her closest friend avers, her somewhat prominent nose has not been powdered

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since the Taft administration.

She is not, however, a Bostonian, or even a New Englander, which annoys her greatly. She has never quite forgiven her parents for migrating from Back Bay to Iowa a few weeks before her advent into this world, for she never has been very happy about the fact that she was born, christened, and schooled in Dubuque. The Corn Belt, however, lost her to that Mecca of the hinterland, New York, and it was here that she achieved her triumphs in the field of applied criminology.

By accident, at first, as is the usual lot of the amateur, but as time went on her proclivity for snooping, plus a growing friendship with a certain detective inspector of the Homicide Division, involved her in an increasing number of cases which developed her talents. So much so, in fact, that whereas at first she quite shamelessly had thrust herself and her ideas into the affairs of the inspector, occasions eventually arose when her help was grudgingly requested by this dour and grizzled individual. And it should be added, to his great credit, that he was not unduly appreciative of the assistance she gave him. It was he who said: "She's just a meddlesome old battle-axe who happens to be the smartest sleuth I ever knew in or out of uniform."

A remark with well-defined nuances for the initiate, for it should be mentioned in passing that the twain once dashed madly to the City Hall with matrimonial intent but events so happened that one can now only speak of the other as an ex-fiancée. Not an unusual prelude, by the way, to that "dearest friend and severest critic" state now enjoyed by both.

Although no respecter of persons, possessed of a distaste for tobacco in all its forms and with a preference for orangeade to cocktails, she is far from being the crabbed and anti-social being that one might suppose. She is not the hard-bitted termagant, or the crush-'em-all-in-her-path sort of woman that the foregoing might imply. To the contrary, she is very much of a romantic, a firm believer in young love, an inveterate matchmaker and unswerving in her desire for "the happy ending." Despite her own unprepossessing appearance, of which an apt descriptive phrase is that she "swoops about like some grim ungainly bird of prey," she is not unaware of beauty and charm in others. The inspector sometimes calls her "Miss Lonelyhearts" which undoubtedly is a euphemism for — GUESS WHO?

(*Solution on page 110*)

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John Glosterman brought back from South Africa an ancient jug, with the Seal of Solomon on the wax and an Arabic inscription warning that a djinn was imprisoned inside.

Shades of Robert Louis Stevenson's "The Bottle-Imp" and Aladdin's genie-lamp!

Here is that rare combination of fairy-tale-and-detective-story — for John Glosterman opened the fabulous jug and when the djinn appeared, Glosterman disappeared!

Reader, if you can resist that crime situation, pass on to the next story. If you can't, meet Prof. John E. Trent who teaches Psychology IV (Abnormal) — and Liz — and the man who looked like an undertaker — in a colorful and romantic detective story never before published anywhere.

THE DJINN MURDER

by FREDRIC BROWN

PROF. JOHN E. TRENT'S class in Psychology IV (Abnormal) wasn't abnormal in the least. The way they'd rushed through the door of the classroom almost before the bell had stopped ringing was proof of that.

Professor Trent grinned, watching them. Again that bell had caught him in the middle of a sentence and the sentence had never been finished. A suspended sentence, one might say. Someday, he'd manage to time his peroration so as to finish under the bell.

"You wished to talk to me, Professor?"

Trent turned his head, startled. He'd completely forgotten telling his one graduate student to remain after class. But there she was. She'd pushed the papers aside from one corner of his desk and was sitting there. A window bright with sunlight was behind her, and the light made a shining golden aura of her blonde hair.

It was a beautiful, a breathtaking, effect. Had he not been a psychology instructor, Professor Trent might have known enough about psychology to realize that she had chosen that pose with deliberate intent.

Not realizing, he tried to frown severely. He said, "Miss Standish —"

"Liz, pliz," said the girl. Her voice was demure, but her eyes were devilish.

"That," said Professor Trent, "is exactly the mental attitude which I have been trying, in your case, to correct ever since you entered my class. Psychology is not a study to

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be taken lightly, to be joked about; not if one wishes to master it and to — uh — be given a passing grade. Now, Miss Standish, I —"

"Will you settle for Elizabeth, then?"

Professor Trent sighed helplessly. "Elizabeth, then. Now, Elizabeth, I —" He paused, not quite knowing how to go on without repeating himself.

Somehow, it was deucedly distracting to have her sitting there, like that, on the corner of his desk. None of his other students affected him that way. Most of them, of course, were Josephine Colleges, making a fetish of sartorial and mental sloppiness.

Miss Standish, being a graduate student, was a bit older. She was different in other ways, too. She was brilliant, when she chose to study, but she just *wouldn't* take Psychology IV (Abnormal) seriously. And she was more feminine than the others. *Very* feminine. But he, Professor John E. Trent, had no time for interest in femininity.

And besides, she was only mocking him. She couldn't really be interested in an uninteresting scholar like himself, easily ten years her senior and — He broke off that line of thought and started in again.

"Miss Standish — uh — I mean Elizabeth — I —"

A dry cough from the direction of the doorway interrupted him. A bit relieved at the interruption, he turned.

"You are Professor Trent?" The voice was sepulchral in tone, and matched, thereby, the figure standing in the doorway. A tall, thin man with a cadaverous face, dressed in black like an undertaker — or at any rate as undertakers used to dress before they became morticians.

"Yes," said Trent. "I — uh — What can I do for you?"

The tall man advanced farther into the classroom.

"They told me I'd find you here; that you'd just finished your last class for the day, and — My name is Glosterman. Harvey Glosterman. I've heard that you specialize in the occult."

"Not exactly, Mr. Glosterman," said Trent, judiciously. "My researches in psychology have led me into borderline territory, and I have investigated alleged psychic phenomena, but —"

The tall man nodded. "Yes. I — I need help and advice, Professor Trent. My brother has disappeared, very strangely. I think it was the djinn."

"Eh?" said Professor Trent.

"I may be wrong, of course. But he had opened the bottle — the — uh — container."

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"But that's a matter for the police, Mr. Glosterman. There is no indication, is there, that any psychic forces are involved? And what can a bottle of gin have to do with a disappearance?"

"Not gin," said the tall man, very earnestly. "Djinn."

"I beg your pardon?"

"D-j-i-n-n," spelled out Mr. Glosterman. "Djinn. He brought it back from South Africa, sealed in a sort of jug or demijohn or — uh — earthenware bottle, with the Seal of Solomon on the wax. And last night he broke the jug, and — Well, he's gone."

Professor Trent closed his eyes and opened them again. He counted, silently, to three. Then he said, "Mr. Glosterman, there is a difference between psychic research and sheer superstition. There is no such thing as a djinn, and never was. It's a legend of the East, anyway, and not of South Africa. And if your brother has disappeared, djinn bottle or no djinn bottle, I'd suggest you go to the police."

"He wouldn't like it, if I did. I think he's trying to communicate with me, and — Well, I'd like help getting the message so I'll *know* what he wants me to do."

"How?" It was the blonde's voice, and it sounded very interested. "*How* is he trying to communicate?"

"By spirit rappings, Miss. But I can't make them spell out anything. The messages just don't make sense. That's what I want the Professor to help me on. I understand he's investigated spirit rappings and — uh — things like that."

He looked appealingly at Trent. "I can offer you any reasonable fee, Professor. I am not poor, and my brother is — was — quite wealthy. I hope you will not refuse to help me — us."

Professor Trent sighed. He turned to the girl. "Miss Standish, you may go. The matter we were discussing can be taken up at some other time."

Her eyes were very wide open as she looked at him. "But Professor, I don't *want* to go. I have no other plans for today, and I'm sure Mr. Glosterman won't mind if —" She turned to the tall man and gave him a dazzling smile. "Mr. Glosterman, you won't mind if I help, too, will you? I'm a graduate student, and I've been studying psychic phenomena *very* intensively. In fact, some people say I'm psychic myself, and I've had some strange experiences."

Professor Trent frowned at her. She was lying outrageously.

But Glosterman, under the influence of that smile, was looking almost human. "Of course, of course," he said. "I shall be most happy. *Most* happy."

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"In fact," said Elizabeth Standish, "even if Professor Trent is too busy to help you, I'll be glad to see if I can get in communication with your brother."

But Professor Trent was taking his hat out of the bottom drawer of his desk, and was rather surprised to find himself slamming the drawer shut. He'd intended to say something else entirely, but the childish slamming of the drawer made him feel foolish, so he said instead, "I'll be glad to try to help you, Mr. Glosterman."

Glosterman's car, parked near the campus entrance, matched the appearance of its owner. It was a huge black sedan of the type undertakers use in driving funeral guests to the cemetery.

"We're bound for the house my brother rented," said Glosterman, as he started the engine. "He disappeared from there, and the — uh — phenomena occur there. It's at 6530 North Wayne Boulevard."

"Quite a way out," Trent said. "Suppose you tell us something about your brother."

"Name's John — John Glosterman, of course. My first name's Harvey, as I told you. We're twins, but don't look much alike. He's shorter than I, and heavier. We're both retired from business. He was an importer, mostly precious and semi-precious stones. Had a couple of hobbies — entomology, for one. Collecting was the other one."

"Collecting what?" Elizabeth added. "Old djinn bottles?"

"Uh — something like that. Collecting objects connected with primitive superstitions. Old idols, spirit gongs, juju masks, voodoo drums — all that sort of thing. He traveled a lot."

"You said he returned recently from South Africa?"

"Just a few days ago, in fact. He rented the house on Wayne Boulevard because his own home's being remodeled — and enlarged, to make room for more collector's items. He planned to camp out in the Wayne Boulevard place until he could get back in his own home, you see. It was already furnished and ready for immediate occupancy."

"I see," said Trent. "But wouldn't a hotel have been more convenient for a short while?"

"John hates hotels. He's — well, he's a bit eccentric, Professor Trent. Prefers to be alone. He has servants come in during the day, of course, but insists they don't live there."

"Um," said Trent. "Gives us a pretty good picture of him. Is he still engaged in business, at all?"

"Not actively. Has a flock of investments, of course. But his lawyer handles most of that for him, and

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leaves him free to follow his hobbies."

Trent nodded. He asked, "Would you say your brother is superstitious? Is that his reason for collecting the sort of objects he collects?"

"Superstitious? Not at all, not at all. He's no more superstitious than I am."

"Oh," said Professor Trent. "But — uh — what's this business about the bottle of djinn?"

"It was an earthenware receptacle — ancient, very ancient. The Arabic inscriptions said it contained an imprisoned djinn. And the stopper was sealed on with the inscription called the Seal of Solomon on the wax."

"The superimposed equilateral triangles. Yes. But what was an Arabian artifact doing in South Africa?"

Glosterman shrugged. "The earliest slavers were Arabs. Possibly one of them brought it. Here's the house."

He swung the big sedan into the driveway and stopped it just past the sidewalk. Another car was already parked there, just ahead, with two men sitting in it.

They got out, and one of them — the fat one — said, "Hello, Mr. Glosterman. You're just on time."

"Yes," said Glosterman. "Miss Standish, Professor Trent; this is Mr. Wolters. My brother's attorney — mine, too, incidentally. And his clerk, Mr. Johnson. I asked them to come here, too; we're going to look over my brother's papers, if he has any here, to see whether there is — uh — anything that — uh —"

The lawyer smiled. "Mr. Glosterman is doubtful whether his brother's disappearance is voluntary or — otherwise. In the former case, he wishes to avoid going to the police, of course. In the latter —"

"Exactly," said Glosterman. "Of course, I could have looked myself, but it would have been hardly legal. But Mr. Wolters has my brother's power of attorney."

Wolters nodded. "You brought the key, Johnson?" he asked of his assistant, a slim young man with patent-leather hair and a cigarette dangling, gangster-fashion, from the corner of his mouth.

Professor Trent looked at Mr. Johnson curiously and wondered whether to believe the cigarette or the neat gray business suit and the shell-rimmed glasses. The effect of movies on the young, he reflected, led to strange combinations. He'd noticed that fact in his own students.

"Yes," said Johnson, and quickly added "Sir." He went ahead to open the door with a key tied to a large cardboard tag.

The front hallway proved to be spacious, well-lighted, and much

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more cheerful looking than the exterior of the house.

Glosterman gestured to a doorway on the right. "He was using this room as a study," he told them. "Whatever we're looking for would — uh — most likely be here. Anyway, we'll start here."

Elizabeth Standish caught Trent's arm as they followed the others through the doorway. She whispered, "Do you *really* think — Oooh, look, that must be the djinn thing."

For there, in plain sight on the top of the desk, was — Well, *he'd* call it a vase, Professor Trent decided. Glosterman had called it a jug or bottle, but it was really more the shape of a vase than either of those, although there was a jug-like handle on one side.

It was about a foot tall, almost globular at the base and tapering into a narrow neck at the top. It looked very, very old and the most obvious thing about it was that it had been broken. Apparently quite recently, and glued back together. A bottle of liquid cement and a small brush lay on a folded newspaper beside the vase.

"You see the seal?" Glosterman pointed out. "The two triangles. John told me it was the Seal of Solomon. He said he wasn't going to open it. I don't think he really thought it contained an imprisoned djinn, of course, but —"

"But what?" demanded Elizabeth.

"But what was the *use* of breaking the Seal? It was — well, the vase was pretty light, so it contained either nothing at all, or — Well, why take a chance? And ruin the Seal, too."

"Um," said Professor Trent. "The Arabic characters. Could he read Arabic, or did he have them translated?"

"Yes. They told that a powerful djinn named Eydhebhe was inside and — uh — was a dangerous being. It warned against breaking the Seal."

"I guess breaking the bottle would be just as bad," said Elizabeth helpfully. "Do you think he did it on purpose?"

"I'm pretty sure not, Miss Standish. He'd have taken out the sealing-wax stopper instead."

"A nice point in logic," said the lawyer. "Either it was empty, or it wasn't. If it was, he broke the Seal or the vase for nothing. If it wasn't — well, it would have been, of course. The only djinn these days goes into Tom Collinses. Johnson, let's start with this desk. You take the drawers on that side —"

Glosterman turned back to Trent with a deprecatory shrug. "Sorry," he said, "but I suppose we'd better wait until they've finished their

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business here before we start — uh — ours. We'll want quiet and — uh — privacy for that."

Outside the study, in which they left the lawyer and his clerk searching, Trent asked, "When did you last see your brother, Mr. Glosterman? And when did you decide that he might be — ah — missing?"

"I helped him move in here day before yesterday, and haven't seen him since. He'd just arrived in town, then, and this place had been rented for his temporary use. The earthenware container was *not* broken then. I noticed he handled it carefully, and asked him what it was. I gathered that while he scoffed at the djinn story, he was going to be careful just the same. And as Mr. Wolters pointed out, he had nothing to gain by — uh — testing the theory. As to when I found he was missing — that was yesterday afternoon. I rang the bell and there was no answer."

"You didn't come inside?"

"Not then. I returned again late in the evening, and there was no light on, and still no answer to the bell. This morning I borrowed the key from Mr. Wolters and let myself in. I looked around and saw — uh — the broken container. And then I heard the spirit rappings, and that was when I became really worried."

"What kind of —" Elizabeth started to ask, but Trent interrupted. "Then you returned to Wolters' office and arranged to meet him here this afternoon, and brought us along?"

"Exactly. For a quite different purpose, of course. About the rappings — I was in the study, and I happened to tap on the desk, a nervous habit of mine when I'm concentrating. And there was an answer."

"It couldn't have been an echo?"

"Positively not. I'd tap once and it would tap once, or if I tapped twice, it would tap twice. But too late for an echo. It seemed to come from the closet."

"Did you search there?"

"Very thoroughly. And then the raps came from somewhere else in the room — I couldn't just decide where. But when I tried asking questions — suggesting one rap for yes and two for no — I couldn't get an answer. The phenomena had ceased. If you'll pardon me a moment, I'll see if they've found anything."

When Glosterman had left the hallway, Elizabeth whispered, "Professor, do you think his brother is playing a trick of some kind? It — it doesn't make sense otherwise. Or maybe one brother or the other is a bit touched, huh?"

Trent shook his head slowly. "I'm afraid not. I might be wrong. But I

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think John Glosterman is dead."

Her eyes widened. "Then you *do* believe in spirit rappings?"

Harvey Glosterman returned before Trent could answer. He said, "They're making a good job of it. I hope you're not in a hurry?"

"Not at all," said Trent. "Meanwhile, there are two questions I'd like to ask. First, did your brother have a sense of humor?"

"Very much so, Professor. A peculiar, dry sense of humor. But you don't think this is —"

"No, I don't," said Trent. "The other question is personal. Was your brother — well, was he strictly honest in all his business dealings, or did he cut corners when there was a chance?"

Glosterman hesitated. He said, "But my brother is retired. He hasn't had any business dealings for some time. So — uh —"

"Thanks," said Trent. "Do you mind if I wander about a bit? I'd like to look at the house, if I may."

When Glosterman nodded, Trent strode off. Apparently, he'd intended to go alone, but Elizabeth caught up with him in the kitchen.

"Professor, why on earth did you ask such silly questions? What can honesty and a sense of humor have to do with — with whatever happened. Unless this John *is* playing a practical joke of some —"

"He isn't. I think he's dead. I wouldn't be surprised if the body is somewhere in the house. No, I think you'd better go back and wait near the study while I —"

"I will *not*," said Elizabeth firmly. Her eyes were wide with excitement. "Mama goes where papa goes."

"You don't mind — uh — corpses?"

"I love them!"

But ten minutes later, when they found John Glosterman in the cellar, she gasped almost loudly enough to be heard upstairs, and clung very tightly to Trent's arm. So tightly that he winced as he stepped back.

The body was that of a short, heavy-set elderly man whose features somewhat resembled those of Harvey Glosterman — enough so that Trent had no doubt of the identity of the corpse.

He said, quietly, "Must have been dragged down here, and put there behind the furnace, but there wasn't any effort to hide it."

"But why would anyone bring the body down here?"

Trent shrugged. "A play for time, that's all. If the body had been left upstairs — in the hall, or the study — it would have been found yesterday morning. Here it would be found only if a search of the house was made. Matter of a day or so difference."

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"How was he — killed? Can you tell?"

"Shot. There. Very little external bleeding but you can see if you look close that —"

The girl was shivering. "I don't *want* to look close. Let's get out of here. I don't like corpses as much as I thought I would. I'll even wait to make you tell me why you were so sure that —"

"Shhh," said Trent.

"You down there?" called Glosterman's voice from the top of the cellar stairs.

"Coming right up," Trent called back. And as they walked toward the stairs: "Awful lot of junk down here, Mr. Glosterman."

"Find anything interesting?"

"Not a thing," said Trent, cheerfully. "Wolters and his man through in the study?"

"Almost," said Glosterman, as they joined him. "I came to tell you they said they'd be out in five minutes."

Trent nodded. "Good, let's go there now. I'd like to see whether —" He let the sentence trail off into nothingness as he led the way back to the study. He hoped Elizabeth Standish had got that look of horror off her face sufficiently so that Glosterman and the others wouldn't notice.

Wolters was zipping shut his brief case as they entered the study. The clerk with the patent-leather hair was leaning against the wall lighting a cigarette with bored concentration.

"Find anything?" Trent inquired.

"Nothing, I'm afraid, that throws any light on where he may have gone, or why. We're going to take a look in the room he slept in upstairs, but —" The lawyer's tone of voice showed that he expected to find nothing there.

There was a big morris chair in one corner of the room. Trent dropped into it with the languid air of a man who has all day to do nothing in. He stretched his lanky legs out in front of him and dropped his arms along the wooden arms of the chair.

He said, "We were planning a sort of — ah — seance. At Mr. Glosterman's suggestion. I don't know whether you're interested in the occult, but you may stay if you wish, Mr. Wolters. You too, Mr. Johnson."

The lawyer shook his head. "Afraid I don't give much credence to the supernatural, Professor. I'd be a disturbing influence. How about you, Johnson? If you want to stay here while I look upstairs —"

The clerk was grinning. "I don't go for spirits, either. Not that kind. Now if you had some good Scotch or Bourbon —"

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"Or djinn?" Elizabeth suggested.

Johnson's grin widened, as he looked at her appreciatively — and, Trent thought, a bit appraisingly. He said, "Well, that all depends on —"

"Shhh!"

Trent's sudden sibilant cut him off in mid-sentence. The professor was sitting bolt upright in the chair now, and his hands gripped the arms so tightly his knuckles were white. There was an expression of strained listening on his face.

Glosterman was looking at him expectantly; the other curiously.

But none of them moved or spoke.

The tableau held a few seconds, and then Trent's face relaxed. He said, "Sorry, I thought I heard —"

He paused, as though groping for the right word, and in that pause they all heard the sharp rap that came from the direction of the desk.

Professor Trent's eyes lighted up, almost ecstatically, as he put a finger to his lips for the others to keep silence.

Then, speaking slowly and framing each word distinctly, he asked, "Are you — John Glosterman?"

Unmistakably, the single rap that gave affirmative answer came from the direction of the desk. They were staring at the desk now. Wolters and Johnson, who had just searched it, were staring almost hypnotically.

Glosterman's eyes were gleaming as he turned back to face Trent. He whispered. "Ask him —" But Trent motioned him to silence.

Again Trent's question was slow and distinct. "Then you are dead?"

A single rap.

"Did you die a natural death?"

And this time, two raps. A negative.

Elizabeth Standish's lips were slightly parted and the expression on her face was that of utter incredulity.

There were sudden beads of sweat on the lawyer's forehead. Johnson, the clerk, happened to be the nearest of them to the desk. He took a step away from it, turned and looked at Trent, and then took two steps closer to the desk, until he was within reach of it.

Trent asked, "Did you break the vase accidentally?"

Two raps.

"On purpose?"

One.

Glosterman whispered, "Ask him whether the —" A violent shake of Trent's head stopped him again.

"Because there was something inside it? Something valuable?"

One rap.

"Papers?"

Two raps.

"Money?"

Again, two.

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Trent hesitated, as though wondering what to ask next. He wetted his lips with the tip of his tongue, and asked, "Diamonds?"

Johnson was staring at Trent. His face had gone pasty white, and one hand came up slowly and took the cigarette from between his lips.

There was a single affirmative rap.

"You were murdered for the diamonds?"

One rap.

"You left them — in Wolters' safe?"

One rap.

"With Mr. Wolters personally?"

One rap, and with it a sharp gasp of fear, as Johnson whirled and made a break for the doorway.

He shoved Wolters aside. Elizabeth was standing almost in the open doorway, but one look at the panic-filled eyes of the clerk — and she hastily stepped out of his way. Not quite, however, to give him clear passage.

Her hand gave the door a push and Johnson ran full into the edge of it as it was swinging shut. Then Trent, who had started moving as soon as Johnson, had the clerk's right arm pinned and twisted behind his back, and the break was over.

Trent said quietly, "Your brother's body is in the basement, Mr. Glosterman. You'd better phone for the police."

"Yes," Professor Trent was explaining, after Johnson had been taken away, "Mr. Glosterman — Mr. John Glosterman — had been an importer. And apparently, while he was in Africa, he couldn't resist bringing in a few illicit diamonds. Possibly he bought the djinn-container first and that made him think of using it to smuggle in gems, or maybe he had a chance to buy diamonds cheaply, and bought the vase specially for the purpose of smuggling them."

"But how," Wolters was asking, "did you know he'd left the diamonds in my safe?"

"I didn't. I played a hunch it was one of the three of you, and watched your faces while I questioned the 'ghost.' Your clerk was the only one who reacted when I mentioned diamonds, so I shot the other questions already knowing the answers.

"You see, after John Glosterman took the diamonds out of the vase, he wanted a safe place to put them. There wasn't any safe here, so he dropped in your office to ask you to leave a package in your safe for him. You weren't there — and he made the mistake of trusting your clerk. But Johnson opened the package. He guessed, of course, that the diamonds had been smuggled in and that no one else knew about them.

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If he killed Glosterman, they'd be his."

"Um," said the lawyer. "But why *diamonds?* Of course, coming from Africa, that's the logical thing to smuggle, but —"

Trent smiled. "He told his brother what was in the vase. Anyway, it would have been an enormous coincidence that the djinn was named Eydhebhe — *Ey — dhe — bhe* — if it wasn't a pun on *I.D.B.* Illicit Diamond Buyer, of course. Those initials are known all over the world. That's why I asked Mr. Glosterman if his brother had a sense of humor, of course . . ."

There was more, and there was still more at police headquarters, with a stenographer taking it down. And there was Elizabeth Standish looking at him in bright-eyed admiration.

Even in the taxi in which he took her home from the station after their deposition had been signed.

"Professor," she said, "is there *anything* you don't know? Arabic and logic and psychology and entomology — Tell me some more about that beetle. The one that made the spirit rappings. What did you call it?"

"The *tock-tockie* beetle," said Trent. "Indigenous to South Africa. With Glosterman an entomologist, of course he'd have been interested. They don't live in this country; not long, anyway. But I thought of it when Glosterman — the living one — told me about tapping in the study and getting an answer. The *tock-tockie* beetle does that.

"And its ability to perceive faint vibrations is phenomenal. Maeterlinck — you should read his *Life of the White Ant*, if you haven't — experimented with them. He found if he barely touched his finger to the ground in tapping, the male beetle, many yards away, would feel the vibration, and respond by tapping back. My taps on the underside of the chair arm were inaudible, even to me. But the beetle —"

"You said the male beetle," interrupted Elizabeth. "Has it something to do with mating?"

"Entirely. The female — when she is in a mood for — uh — romance, taps, usually twice. Out in the open, it has a *tock-tock* sound. The male hears her — I use 'hear' in the broad sense of perceiving vibrations — and responds and they locate one another through —"

"A double tap?" asked Elizabeth. "Like this?" Her fingernail tapped lightly once against the patent leather handbag lying in her lap.

"Yes, like that."

"But it didn't work," she said plaintively. "Shall I try again?"

"Didn't work? What on earth do

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you —?" He turned to look at her. And her eyes were laughing at him, but there was more than laughter in them.

"Oh," said Professor Trent. And, after all, he merely *taught* Psychology IV (Abnormal); he was not a specimen of abnormality himself. His hand trembled just a trifle as he leaned forward and rapped twice on the glass partition of the taxi.

The driver half-turned in his seat and lowered the glass.

"Don't take us straight there," said Trent. "Just drive around a while."

Solution to "Guess Who?"

None other than our old friend Hildegarde Withers, created by Stuart Palmer — now Lieut. Stuart Palmer of the U. S. Army. Watch for another adventure in the "criminal" career of Hildegarde Withers; it is called "The Lady from Dubuque" and will appear in the next issue (March 1944).

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You will find the editorial comment on this story at the end rather than at the beginning. This is one of those stories that must be read first in order to be discussed. . . .

THE WATERS OF OBLIVION

by S. WEIR MITCHELL

Two years after the Mutiny, John Hughes, a young captain of infantry, was stationed at Meerut. This man knew many tongues and loved to wrestle with dialects. One hot day in the bazaar he entered a book-shop and among piles of trash fell upon a thin pamphlet. It was stitched between purple paper covers, and, as he soon made out, was a manuscript in Pali.

Now, Pali is a tongue which few white men understand. It delighted the captain, who paid a trifle and put the leaves in his pocket. He dined at the mess. Returning late that night to his quarters, he found the book on his table, where his servant had laid it.

He made himself comfortable, lighted a cheroot, and took up the pamphlet. Yes, it was written with care in Pali, of which he knew something. He remembered that a certain reverend, a mission priest, had made a full vocabulary of this tongue. He got up and after some search found it, and sat down again to enjoy the pleasing exasperations of a language of which he knew enough to be preassured of the difficulties it presented. But first he looked the little book over. The covers, of a purple which was unlike other purples, were faded, worn, and frayed. Usually these second-hand bazaar books had queer smells by which their past might be guessed. The little purple manuscript had a faint fragrance which vainly taxed his remembrance for the place where he had known it.

As he ran over the pages he saw that some one had made marginal comments of small importance. At the end of the book were written four lines, in a very minute English script, and, as he concluded, by a woman's hand. The ink had faded and it was so hard to read by candlelight that he gave up the effort, thinking that it would be easier to make out by day.

The book was his real attraction. He settled himself for a bout with its meanings, as eager as a traveller in a strange land.

On the inside front cover was written in a large masculine hand:

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"*This Book was once a Man.*"

The phrase pleased him.

"I like that," he said aloud. "That ought to be put over the door of a library." He wondered if it were a quotation, or if the reading of the manuscript had prompted it.

He looked around the room. There were books everywhere, on chair and table: a few in his own language, — the greater books, — and many in the tongues of the East. Some were native manuscripts. He felt for a time as though the room were spirit-haunted. A dreamy pleasure in the thought kept his fancy busy for a while, and he said aloud: "Yes, every book was once a man."

At last he returned to the purple-tinted little volume, saying to himself: "So two other English people have handled and perhaps read it." That alone gave the script unusual interest, for few of his own race read Pali.

It began thus:

"I, Abdallah, a man of Ceylon, on the ninth day of the seventh moon, being now in my thirty-first year, here set down certain things for my own remembrance. I shall write of my search for the Well of the Waters of Forgetfulness. I am assured by the wise moonshee Salak Bey that in them a man may wash away remembrance and be as the dead who are born again, without memories of the life they have lost. Thus shall I cease to know that in anger I slew him I loved best, my father's son."

"By George!" said the captain. "What a queer find!"

He sat a little while with the booklet open on his knee. Had it been written in English and had he been in his own land, he would have smiled at this dreamer or mystic. But the East is the East and he had lived much among its people.

He returned to the pages and slowly and painfully made out their meaning, finding it even harder because of being in written characters. There were in all, or had been, as he counted, sixty-three pages. Two were missing in part, as he saw by the torn remainders.

For the most part it was a record of distances travelled, of visits to noted temples, and of vast foot-sore wanderings. Here and there were bits of more personal reflection. Over these the captain paused, being a man of imaginative turn and able to enter sympathetically into the ways of the native mind. "Ah!" he exclaimed, as he made clear to himself this passage:

"If I find what I seek and so lose remembrance of all that has been, whither will have gone the thoughts of my life? Shall I never meet them again? Surely. The thoughts of a man do not die, but are fragments of

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the eternal mind, and go hence whither they came; being as children that are born, and, dying, live again elsewhere."

A little further he read: "If I lose all memory, and have release from the hell of seeing the dead always at my feet, in his blood, I shall forget, too, my wife and my son. I must decide to keep my anguish and my love — or to part with both. I have made my choice."

Again he read:

"I have lost by my own act a man dear to me. I have both the grief and the sin. Long have I wandered in the land of sorrow. There every man is alone, and there is no language, for in the land of sorrow there is but one inhabitant."

"Great Buddha! but that is all pretty grim," said the reader, and went on with rapt attention. As he read, the manuscript became harder to decipher, the ink paler, the letters ill-formed, blurred, or giving signs of tremor. At last he came on a date, and knew that the writer must have been many years wandering. A man in the vigor of life wrote the first lines; it was an old man who wrote the last.

"Clearly insane from remorse," thought the captain.

It was now far into the night, but still the indistinct pages held him, as he read on and on, finding now and then that words he should have known well obliged him to pause and search for elusive meanings. He concluded at length that his brain was tired and had the uncertainty of action which over-tired muscles exhibit. He reluctantly laid aside the little book and undressed. When ready for bed, his curiosity prevailing, he took it up again, reading with increase of difficulty. Near the close he found this passage, which at once reassured his reason as to the unhappy writer's delusion:

"At last I knew at morning that it was near, and now at evening I have found the valley, and the seven red stones as the moonshee described them.

"I am here, where the years and long travel have brought me. The vale slopes sharply and is clad with bamboos. A path winds among them, and here is that I seek. An abounding spring rises up, in vast flow, and must return whither it came, for it has no outlet. The earth continually takes back what it gave. This is as I was told. The Well of the Waters of Forgetfulness. Here I have sat long in thought. At last I take out my pen and write. Soon all the past will fade by degrees and never after shall I know it. Even what I write will be as if it were the story of what another wrote. My brother will be avenged even in my relief, because I shall no

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more see those I love, or know them as my own. I sit here in the shadows and think on what has been and what will be. I shall feel the world of memories fading like a tablet that is cleansed. It will come slowly; I shall feel the joy of forgetting.

"I have washed in the spring and wondered. It is not like the waters of earth. It does not wet the hand or head, but it is as if a cool wind went over them. And now I dip in it my garments, and write in haste, being aware that all my past life is growing dim to me. Let my latest words be of thanks."

Here followed a few lines, under which the hand of a woman had written the words which the reader had observed on his first look at the manuscript. He was now too eager to wait. He found a magnifying-glass, and then easily read this rendering of the final lines:

By the waters of oblivion
I sat down and wept;
By the waters of oblivion
Life slumbered and slept.

Then she had added: "Would that I also could find them — or forgiveness."

Again the captain sat quiet in thought, wondering who and what the woman was. The strangeness of this wild story held him, and he smiled at the feeling of how near he was to accepting it as true. But he had felt before the spell of the Eastern world. At last he rose and looked about him. He had a baffling sensation of everything in the room being remote from him, and of a little trouble in recalling something to which he was to attend next day. He dismissed it, acknowledging anew the scholar's experience of the effect of mental tension, which had gone far beyond the mere needs of the translation. He went to bed, and lay a long while thinking about the man's madness, and seeing the gaunt white figure in the bamboo grove, bending over what he believed to be the waters of oblivion. Then he slept.

At morning his servant awakened him, and said: "The bath is ready; the sahib's garments are here. The sahib was hard to waken, and he will be late for parade."

The young man sat up, and said: "Who are you? Where am I?"

The man repeated his statement, as Hughes got out of bed.

The servant left him.

Hughes said long afterwards, when he told me this tale:

"I sat down and tried to recall something which I had done the night before. I could not. I found the room unusual, rather than altogether new. I forgot the parade, and began to look at this and that. I was

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like a ship in a fog which now clears, and leaves only a thin mist, and then isolates the ship in gray aloofness.

"I remembered that I must clap my hands when I wanted something. I did so; my man came back.

" 'What are these for?' I asked, pointing to my equipments.

"He said: 'The captain sahib's uniform.'

"I took up a photograph, and asked who it was. It seemed to me a beautiful woman.

" 'Great Allah! it is the lady the captain sahib will marry.'

"I laughed, and said inanely: 'I — I don't remember.'

"I recall nothing else, but they said I slept two days. An ass of a doctor declared I had had sunstroke. It was nonsense. I was up the third day, and as fit as anybody. However, something was wrong with me. I think that now I know very well what it was. I was a month at Simla before I entirely recovered my memory, and to this day the photograph of my wife has, now and then, that curious look of far-awayness I had felt about things in my room.

"Soon after our marriage I told my wife this rather queer story. The next day she burned the book, and, as she told me, did not even open it, which I thought wise, interesting, and unusual. As for the sunstroke, that is bosh, and India is a very bewildering country."

This story, seemingly one of pure mystery, is nevertheless susceptible to deductive speculation. . . . According to the author, the person who wrote the strange manuscript bound in purple wrappers "slew him I loved best, my father's son." Therefore the writer of the book, being a man, killed his brother.

Is it possible that this book — "of a purple which was unlike other purples" — was the memoirs of Cain who rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him? A fabulous book, indeed! — the autobiography of one of the sons of Adam!

If this staggering theory is true, then how is it possible for Cain to call himself "Abdallah, a man of Ceylon"? Let us speculate further. The writer of the book describes himself as a wanderer — "long have I wandered." Cain, the world's first murderer, was punished for his crime by being sentenced to wander the earth — for the Lord said unto Cain: 'A fugitive and a wanderer shalt thou be in the earth.' Then — was Cain the Wandering Jew? Is this the solution to one of the most stupendous mysteries of identity in all history?

As the Wandering Jew, Cain would have become many different people in many different places, throughout the ages. Thus he could, at one stage of his eternal life, have been "Abdallah, a man of Ceylon" — or so known to his fellowmen. Thus he could have kept a diary in the ancient language of Pali.

Your Editor does not know precisely what the author, Mr. Mitchell, had in mind. But the possible implications, the hypothetical inferences, are strange indeed. . . .

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We opened this issue with a special Christmas treat. In the same holiday spirit, we close the issue with an extra-special New Year's treat.

This sparkling and witty dramatization of "A Scandal in Bohemia" was written by Christopher Morley to celebrate New Year's Eve four years ago. The playlet was enacted in the Morley home and all the parts were taken either by members or friends of the Morley family. According to the original manuscript, the stage properties included one silk hat, one harmonica, one dressing-gown, one slipper, and one cocaine syringe — a singular singularity of props. The inclusion of a hypodermic is a curious note of realism — it prompts the question: Was there a doctor in the house?

This is the first time Mr. Morley's dramatization has ever appeared in print — for which we are deeply grateful both to Mr. Morley and to Mr. Denis P. S. Conan Doyle, son of the late Sir Arthur Conan Doyle of beloved memory.

Since this drama was performed wholly for the personal pleasure of a small group — or, as Mr. Morley phrased it in a letter to your Editor, "only for domestic amusement" — it should be clearly understood that no part of the script is available for public or private use, either by professionals or amateurs, or for reprint or republication of any kind.

Happy New Year!

A SCANDAL IN BOHEMIA

(Adapted from the Sacred Writings as a New Year's Eve Pastime)

by CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

The Characters

MRS. HUDSON
DR. WATSON
SHERLOCK HOLMES
W. G. S. VON ORMSTEIN, KING OF BOHEMIA
IRENE ADLER

with the assistance of sound effects, walk-ons and Noises Off by competent members of the company

N.B. A few minor liberties have been taken with the canonical writings

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SCENE I: *Baker Street—March 20, 1888*

MRS. HUDSON: 'ow nice to see you again, Doctor. All well at 'ome, we trusts? These narsty March winds are so prelavent for the la grippe.

WATSON: Ah, Mrs. Hudson, I don't know what we doctors would do without the London climate to help us.

MRS. HUDSON: I just took up the spirit case and the gasogene, so you can 'ave a little something to warm you up. Mr. 'Olmes will be *that* tickled to see you. 'e misses you dreadful, Doctor Watson. Sometimes 'e even 'as to call *me* in to get what 'e calls a hun-blemished reaction. When 'e told me about that 'orrible affair of the Aluminium Crutch, I was that flustered I didn't 'ave a leg to stand on.

WATSON: Well, Mrs. Hudson, perhaps that was what the crutch was for. I needn't ask if he's in, I can hear — but that's not the fiddle?

MRS. HUDSON: No sir, 'e's trying it out with the 'armonica latterly, it don't seem quite so pungent for the neighbors.

WATSON: I suppose anything is better than the cocaine. Hot upon the scent of some new problem, I expect.

MRS. HUDSON: (*Knocking*) Begging your pardon, Mr. 'Olmes, —— (*Other half of curtain drawn. Holmes in chair in firelight.*)

HOLMES: Watson! My manner is seldom effusive. but I'm glad to see you. Pull up your old chair. Cigars. Spirit case. Gasogene. Or tobacco? (*Hands slipper.*)

WATSON: Thank you. This is like old times. I should be embarrassed if you were emotional. All emotions are abhorrent to your cold precise mind.

HOLMES: Wedlock suits you. You have put on 7½ pounds since I saw you.

WATSON: Seven.

HOLMES: I should have thought a trifle more. And in practise again, I observe.

WATSON: How do you know?

HOLMES: I deduce it. How do I know that you have been getting yourself very wet, and that you have a most clumsy and careless servant?

WATSON: My dear Holmes, this is too much. You would have been burned if you lived a few centuries ago. It's true that I had a country walk on Thursday and came home in a mess; but I've changed my clothes so I don't see how you deduce it. As for Mary Jane, she's incorrigible and my wife has given her notice; but how did you guess?

HOLMES: (*Chuckles, rubs long nerv-*

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ous hands together) Simplicity itself. On the inside of your left shoe, just where this comfortable firelight strikes it, the leather is scored by six parallel cuts. Obviously caused by careless scraping to remove mud. Hence my double deduction that you had been out in vile weather, and had a malignant boot-slitting specimen of the London slavey.

WATSON: It was really quite obvious, I suppose.

HOLMES: As to your practice, if a gentleman walks into my rooms smelling of iodoform, and a bulge on his top hat to show where he has secreted his stethoscope, I must be dull indeed not to know him a member of the medical profession.

WATSON: (*Helps himself to a drink*) Well, I can cure the aroma of iodoform.

HOLMES: Cure us both. (*Holmes plays harmonica to cover Watson's work on the drinks.*)

WATSON: You know, Holmes, when I hear you give your reasons, it appears so ridiculously simple I could do it myself; but I'm always baffled until you explain. Yet I believe my eyes are as good as yours.

HOLMES: Quite so. You see, but you do not observe. Since you are interested in these little problems, what do you think of this. It came by the last post. Read it aloud. (*Hands over letter.*)

WATSON: (*Reads aloud*)

There will call upon you tonight, at a quarter to eight o'clock, a gentleman who desires to consult you upon a matter of the very deepest moment. You have shown that you are one who may safely be trusted with matters which are of an importance which can hardly be exaggerated. This account of you we have from all quarters received. Be in your chamber then at that hour, and do not take it amiss if your visitor wear a mask.

This is indeed a mystery. What do you imagine it means?

HOLMES: It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data. But the note itself. What do you deduce from it?

WATSON: The man who wrote it was presumably well-to-do. Such paper could not be bought under half a crown a packet. It is peculiarly strong and stiff.

HOLMES: Peculiar, that is the very word. It is not an English paper at all. Hold it up to the light.

WATSON: E, G, and then P, and then G, T. — It's woven into the texture of the paper. Why, Holmes, it's a watermark. We should be able to make something of that.

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HOLMES: GT, of course, stands for Gesellschaft, German for Company. P probably for Papier.

WATSON: Paper Company!

HOLMES: You're a bloodhound. Now for the EG. Let's glance at the Lippincott Gazetteer. Eglow, Eglonitz, here we are, Egria. In Bohemia, not far from Carlsbad. "Remarkable as being the scene of the death of Wallenstein, and numerous glass factories and paper mills." Ha, ha, my boy, what do you think of that?

WATSON: The paper was made in Bohemia!

HOLMES: Precisely. And the man who wrote the note is a German. Note the construction of the sentence, "This account of you we have from all quarters received." It is only the German who is so uncourteous to his verbs. It remains therefore to discover what is wanted by this German who writes upon Bohemian paper and prefers wearing a mask to showing his face. (*Horses' hoofs*) And here he comes, if I'm not mistaken. (*Holmes whistles*) A pair, by the sound. A nice little brougham and a pair of beauties. 150 guineas apiece. There's money in this, Watson, if there's nothing else.

WATSON: I think I'd better go.

HOLMES: Not a bit, Doctor. Stay where you are. I am lost without my Boswell. (*Heavy steps heard.*)

WATSON: He's coming.

HOLMES: Sit down in that armchair and give us your best attention. (*Heavy knock.*) Come in! (*Enter King of Bohemia.*)

KING: You had my note? I told you I would call.

HOLMES: Pray take a seat. This is my friend and colleague Dr. Watson. Whom have I the honor to address?

KING: You may address me as the Count von Kramm, a Boehmisch nobleman. I understand your friend iss man of honor und discretion? If nod, I prefer to communicate mit your singular self. (*Watson starts to rise. Holmes pushes him back.*)

HOLMES: It is both or none. What you say to this gentleman does not travel very far.

KING: Zo. Den I am binding you both to absolute secrecy for two yearss, at de end of soch time de matter vill be of no importance. At present it is so veighty it might haf influences upon European history.

HOLMES: I promise.

WATSON: And I.

KING: You are excusing dis mask. De august personage who employ me vish his agent to be unknown. De name I just apply to myself is not accurate.

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HOLMES: I can think of others. (*Lounges languidly.*)

KING: De circumstance is in great delicacy, und every precautiousness ve take to qvench what might be an immense scandal, compromise one of de reigning families of Europe.

HOLMES: I wouldn't be surprised, my dear Count, some of the reigning families will be compromised by experts.

KING: Enough of soch byplay. Mr. Holmes, de matter implicates de House of Ormstein, hereditary Kings of Bohemia.

HOLMES: If your Majesty would condescend to state your case, I should be better able to advise.

KING: (*Leaps up in agitation; throws off mask*) You are right. I am burning my britches. Vy should I attempt to gonceal it? I am de King.

HOLMES: Quite so. Your Majesty had scarcely spoken before I was aware I was addressing Wilhelm Gottsreich Sigismond von Ormstein, hereditary King of Bohemia.

KING: And Grand Duke of Cassel-Felstein. Don't forget de Grand duchy, it's de only property dat meets its taxes. — However, you can understand I am not accustomed to do such business in my own person. But de matter is so ticklish how do I confide in an agent mitout putting myself in his power? All de vay from Prague to consult you I haf come.

HOLMES: Then pray consult.

KING: Since five years I am the acquaintance of de well-known adventuress, Irene Adler. Perhaps acquaintance is too feeble a term, Mr. Holmes. I tink you call it boon companions. You understand, gentlemen, she is companion, I am de boon. Maybe she is familiar?

HOLMES: Look her up in my index, Doctor.

WATSON: Yes, here she is. Between a Hebrew rabbi and a staff commander who writes on deep sea fishes.

KING: I don't qvite understand. I don't mind de rabbi, but vot relations did she haf mit dis fish commander?

WATSON: It's quite all right, your Majesty. A merely alphabetical propinquity.

HOLMES: Born in New Jersey in 1858. Contralto, hum. La Scala, hum. Imperial opera of Warsaw, yes. Retired from operatic stage, ha! Living in London, quite so! Hmmm. I see. So your Majesty became entangled with this young person, wrote her some compromising letters, and is now desirous of getting those letters back.

KING: I don'd know how you guess,

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but dat is exact. Letters of dreadful varmth, Mr. Holmes. Really lovely letters if day vere only anonymous.

HOLMES: You see, Watson, the pride of authorship. — Was there a secret marriage?

KING: None.

HOLMES: No legal papers or certificates?

KING: Gott! No, noddings.

HOLMES: Then if this young person should produce her letters for blackmailing or other purposes, how is she to prove their authenticity?

KING: Dere is de writing. It is very strong und recognizable.

HOLMES: Pooh, pooh! Forgery.

KING: Mein private notepaper.

HOLMES: Stolen.

KING: My own seal.

HOLMES: Imitated.

KING: My photograph.

HOLMES: Bought.

KING: Ve vere both in de photograph.

HOLMES: Oh, dear, that's very bad. Your Majesty has indeed committed an indiscretion.

KING: Ach. Unmoegliche Narrheit! I vas insane. I vas den only de Kronprinz. I vas young.

HOLMES: The Ormsteins mature very gradually. — Well, your Majesty, obviously the photograph must be recovered. It must be bought.

KING: She vill not sell.

HOLMES: Stolen, then.

KING: Five attempts ve haf made. Two burglars at my expense account made a ransack in her house. Once ve plunder her luggage vhen she is travelling. Tvice ve do feetpad in de Park. Dere iss no result.

HOLMES: Quite a pretty little problem.

KING: Very serious on me. She ruin me mit dis snoopshot.

HOLMES: You are about to be married?

KING: Yes, to Clothilde von Saxe-Meiningen, she spring off second from de old King of Scandinavia. You know how strict is dat family. She iss herself de very soul of delicacy. Any doubts on my conduct vould ruin de whole protocol. De rapture iss rupture.

HOLMES: And I suppose Miss Adler ——

KING: Surely. She threaten to send de old King de photograph. If she say so, she vill do it. She has a soul of steel. Rather dan I shall marry anodder voman, dere are no lengths she vill not go.

HOLMES: You are sure she has not sent the letter yet?

KING: She said she would send it the day the betrothal was made public. That will be next Monday.

HOLMES: (*Yawning*) Oh, then we have three days. That is fortunate,

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as I have one or two matters of some importance on hand. Your Majesty is staying in London?

KING: You will find me at the Langham, under the name of Graf von Kramm.

HOLMES: And as to money?

KING: Oh, you have carte blanche.

HOLMES: I prefer to have it endorsed.

KING: I am glad to see you so alert. (*Takes out bag of money.*) Here are 300 pounds gold and 700 in notes.

HOLMES: That will do for expenses. (*Gives receipt.*) And Mademoiselle's address?

KING: Briony Lodge, Serpentine Avenue, St. John's Woods.

HOLMES: One more information please. Was the photograph cabinet size?

KING: Shrecklich! It was; and a good likeness.

HOLMES: Hum. Very painful. Well, good night, your Majesty. I trust we shall soon have some good news for you.

KING: Ich lebe in der Hoffnung. Guten Abend, meine Herren. (*Exit.*)

WATSON: I must go too, Holmes. Mrs. Forrester is with my wife this evening, but she will want to get back to Camberwell.

HOLMES: If you will be good enough to call tomorrow afternoon at three, I should like to chat this little matter over with you.

SCENE II: *Baker Street*

MRS. HUDSON: 'e's not back yet, doctor, but 'e said 'e'd expect you if you 'ave no urgent deathbeds.

WATSON: There's a rather nasty case of bronchial pneumonia, but I dare say he'll pull through.

MRS. HUDSON: Mr. 'Olmes went out at eight o'clock this morning. Give me quite a turn 'e did, 'e was dressed as an 'orseman.

WATSON: A Norseman, Mrs. Hudson? You mean a Viking?

MRS. HUDSON: Oh, no, Doctor. I mean one of those chaps what gives 'orses a comb and brush-up. You know, a groom.

WATSON: Disguised, eh? The stage lost a fine actor when Holmes became a specialist in crime.

MRS. HUDSON: You may say so.

WATSON: I can see this case must be more important than I thought. I think I'll just write a postcard to my patient to say I won't be there till tomorrow.

MRS. HUDSON: I think I 'ear 'im now. I better go get the gasogene and the spirit case. (*Exit. Watson writes postcard. Enter Holmes, sketchily made up as groom.*)

WATSON: My dear Holmes! I should never have known you.

HOLMES: (*Sits, stretches legs, laughs*) Well, really! Ha, ha, ha.

WATSON: What is it?

HOLMES: I'm sure you could never

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guess how I employed my morning.

WATSON: Something to do with horses.

HOLMES: Good man, Watson. Yes, I left the house in the character of a groom out of work. I soon found Briony Lodge. Large sitting room with long windows and those preposterous English fasteners which a child could open. Down the street was a mews. I lent the ostlers a hand rubbing down their horses, and in exchange I received tuppence, a glass of half and half, two fills of shag, and as much information as I could desire about Miss Irene Adler.

WATSON: What about her?

HOLMES: She has turned all the men's heads. The daintiest thing under a bonnet that ever lived. So says Serpentine Mews to a man. She sings at concerts, drives out at five every day, and returns at seven for dinner. Has only one male visitor, but a good deal of him. Mr. Godfrey Norton of the Inner Temple; dark, handsome and dashing. In fact he dashes twice a day.

WATSON: When a lawyer calls twice a day it means trouble for somebody.

HOLMES: Quite so. But is she his client, his friend, or his ——

WATSON: Sssh! here's Mrs. Hudson —— (*Enter Mrs. Hudson with gasogene and spirit case.*)

HOLMES: Thank you, Mrs. Hudson. This will be all I want. I'm too busy to think of food this evening.

MRS. HUDSON: Nothing to do with firearms I 'ope, Mr. 'Olmes.

HOLMES: I think not. But will you put out my costume for the Nonconformist clergyman. You know, black hat, baggy trousers, white tie. Like Mr. John Hare at the St. James's Theatre.

MRS. HUDSON: Oh, Mr. 'Olmes, I don't think you should tyke liberties with chapel.

HOLMES: And post Dr. Watson's card for him. I can see there's one gone from the rack.

WATSON: Dear me. I had quite forgotten. (*Gives card to Mrs. Hudson, who exits.*)

HOLMES: Well, to continue. This Godfrey Norton, was he Miss Adler's friend, solicitor, or paramour? If he was her attorney, she had probably transferred the photograph to his keeping. I was pondering this when a hansom drove up to Briony Lodge. A gentleman sprang out, handsome, dark, aquiline, moustached. Evidently Mr. Norton himself.

WATSON: What astonishing luck.

HOLMES: Remember your Hafiz, my dear Watson. "Luck is infatuated with the efficient." Mr. Norton

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was in a great hurry, shouted to the cabby to wait, and rushed into the house. He was there half an hour. I could catch glimpses of him through the windows, pacing up and down, waving his arms.

WATSON: He must feel himself very much *chez soi* to behave like that?

HOLMES: Presently he rushed out again, looking more flurried than before. He pulled out a gold watch and looked at it. "Drive like the devil," he shouted, "first to Gross & Hankey's in Regent Street, then to St. Monica's Church." Half a guinea if you do it in 20 minutes."

WATSON: Gross & Hankey's? Holmes, it's a jeweler's. Perhaps there was something wrong with his gold watch?

HOLMES: I was wondering whether to follow when up the lane came a neat little landau, the coachman with his tie under his ear and the harness tags all sticking out of the buckles. Our heroine shot out of the hall door and into the carriage. A lovely woman, Watson, with a face that a man might die for.

WATSON: Really, Holmes; this from you?

HOLMES: And what do you think she cried to the coachman? "The Church of St. Monica; and half a sovereign if you reach it in 20 minutes."

WATSON: Norton offered sixpence more.

HOLMES: I noticed that, of course; feminine thrift. A cab came through the street and I jumped in. It was 25 minutes to 12, so I knew what was in the wind. When I got to the church there were the two and a surpliced clergyman expostulating. I lounged up the side aisle. Suddenly Godfrey Norton came running towards me. "Thank God," he cried, "you'll do. Hurry! Only 3 minutes or it won't be legal." In short I found myself mumbling responses and vouching for things and generally assisting in the secure tying up of Irene Adler, technical spinster, to Godfrey Norton, bachelor.

WATSON: This is a very unexpected turn of affairs!

HOLMES: Quite so. I found my plans seriously menaced. At the church door they separated, he driving back to the Temple and she to her own house. So I went off to make my own arrangements.

WATSON: What are they?

HOLMES: Spirit case and gasogene, Watson. And I shall want your co-operation.

WATSON: I shall be delighted.

HOLMES: You don't mind breaking the law?

WATSON: Not in the least.

HOLMES: Nor running a chance of

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arrest?

WATSON: Not in a good cause.

HOLMES: In two hours we must be on the scene of action. Miss Irene, or Madame rather, returns from her drive at seven. We must be at Briony Lodge to meet her.

WATSON: And what then?

HOLMES: You must leave that to me. I have arranged what is to occur. There will probably be some small unpleasantness. Do not join in it. It will end in my being conveyed into the house. Four or five minutes afterward the sitting room window will open. You are to station yourself close to that window.

WATSON: Yes?

HOLMES: When I wave my hand you will throw into the room what I give you to throw, and at the same time raise the cry of *Fire!* You follow me?

WATSON: Entirely.

HOLMES: It is nothing very formidable. (*Takes out cigar-shaped object.*) An ordinary plumber's smoke-rocket. When you raise your cry of fire, it will be taken up by a number of people. Walk, not run, to the end of the street and I will rejoin you.

WATSON: You may rely on me.

SCENE III: *Briony Lodge*

(*Sound of horses' hoofs. Then sound of brawl offstage.*)

VOICE: 'ere, stand aht o' the lydy's wye.

VOICE: 'oo's shoving in 'ere?

VOICE: Open the kerridge door, lydy.

VOICE: *I* opened it, lydy.

VOICE: Gang o' roughs, that's what you are.

VOICE: A copper for a poor old bloke, lydy.

HOLMES's VOICE: Let me help you, madam. Stand aside, please ——

VOICE: Blymey, it's a parson!

VOICE: Give 'im one on the napper!

VOICE: Nah you've done it. (*Sounds of struggle. Enter Irene Adler, very swanky.*)

IRENE: (*Looking back, agitated*) Is the poor gentleman much hurt?

VOICE: 'e got a conky one, pore ole christer.

VOICE: 'e's dead.

VOICE: There's life in 'im.

VOICE: 'e'll be gorn afore you git 'im to the orspital.

VOICE: 'e's a bryve ole chap. Theyda 'ad the lydy's purse.

VOICE: 'e carnt lie in the street. Can we bring 'im in, miss?

IRENE: Bring him into the sitting room. Put him on the sofa. This way, please. (*Holmes carried in by three or four supers.*) Oh, my poor fellow, what dreadful injuries. (*She wipes off blood.*)

HOLMES: (*Feebly*) I'm all right. Just a little air. Air!

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IRENE: At once, you poor soul. (*Opens window. Holmes waves his hand. Smoke rocket thrown into room. Everyone cries* Fire! *Irene, in panic, rushes to hiding place and gets photo, clutches it to her breast. Holmes watching her movements.*)

SCENE IV: *Baker Street*

(*Holmes and Watson at breakfast.*)

HOLMES: You did very nicely, Doctor. Nothing could have been better.

WATSON: You have the photograph?

HOLMES: I know where it is.

WATSON: How did you find out?

HOLMES: She showed me, as I told you she would.

WATSON: I am still in the dark.

HOLMES: A pity, Watson, a pity. However, I wired the King last night and he will be here any moment. Then we shall go to Briony Lodge and retrieve the picture.

WATSON: Suppose she has it secreted on her own person?

HOLMES: You forget, it is cabinet size. Mrs. Hudson could do so, but Madam Irene is not ample enough. (*King of Bohemia rushes in.*)

KING: You have really got it?

HOLMES: Not yet.

KING: But you haf hopes?

HOLMES: I have hopes.

KING: Prachtvoll! I am impatience himself.

HOLMES: I had better tell you at once, your Majesty, Irene Adler is married.

KING: Married! Ven?

HOLMES: Yesterday.

KING: Teufelsdroeck! But mit whom?

HOLMES: An English lawyer named Norton.

KING: She could not love him.

HOLMES: I am in hopes she does.

KING: Lèse majesté. How so?

HOLMES: It would spare your Majesty all fear of future embarrassment.

KING: Wahrscheinlich! It is true. Yet — I vish she had been in my own station. Vot a Queen she would have made. (*Enter Mrs. Hudson with letter.*)

MRS. HUDSON: By messenger, Mr. 'Olmes.

HOLMES: Thank you. (*Mrs. H. exits.*) From the lady herself. What can this be? And a photograph with it!

KING: It is herself. I should know. I gave her that dress. Gott! (*Holmes reads the letter.*)

HOLMES: (*Reading*)

My dear Mr. Sherlock Holmes:

You really did it very well. Until after the alarm of fire, I had not a suspicion. Then, when I found how I had betrayed myself, I began to think. I had been warned against you months ago. You know I have been trained as an actress.

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Male costume is nothing to me. I often take advantage of the freedom it gives. I got into my walking clothes, as I call them, and came down just as you departed.

I followed you to your door, and so made sure that I was really an object of interest to the celebrated Mr. Sherlock Holmes. Did you notice that slender young man who bade you goodnight just as you were getting out your latchkey? That was I.

My husband and I both thought the best resource was flight when pursued by so formidable an antagonist. We are taking the 5:15 a.m. from Charing Cross for the Continent. As to the photograph, your client may rest in peace. I love and am loved by a better man than he. I keep it only to safeguard myself, and leave instead a picture he might care to possess. And I remain, dear Mr. Sherlock Holmes, very truly yours,

IRENE NORTON; née ADLER

KING: Potztausend Blaufeuer! Etwas weibliches! Vot a woman. Did I not tell you how qvick und resolute she was? Vould she not make an admirable qveen? Vot a pity she was not on my level.

HOLMES: She seems indeed to be on a different level. I am sorry I have not been able to bring your Majesty's business to a more successful conclusion.

KING: On the contrary, vot could be more successful? Her vord is always inviolate. De photo is as safe as if it vere in de fire.

HOLMES: I am glad to hear your Majesty say so.

KING: Tell me how I can reward you. Dis ring, it iss a snake emerald. (*Offers ring.*)

HOLMES: Your Majesty has something I should value even more highly.

KING: You have but to name it.

HOLMES: This photograph!

KING: (*Amazed*) Irene's photograph? Vy certainly, if you vish it.

HOLMES: I thank your Majesty. Then there is no more to be done in the matter. I have the honor to wish you a very good morning. (*Turns away without shaking the King's hand. Comes down to footlights, gazing at picture.*)

HOLMES: *THE Woman!*

(*Curtain*)

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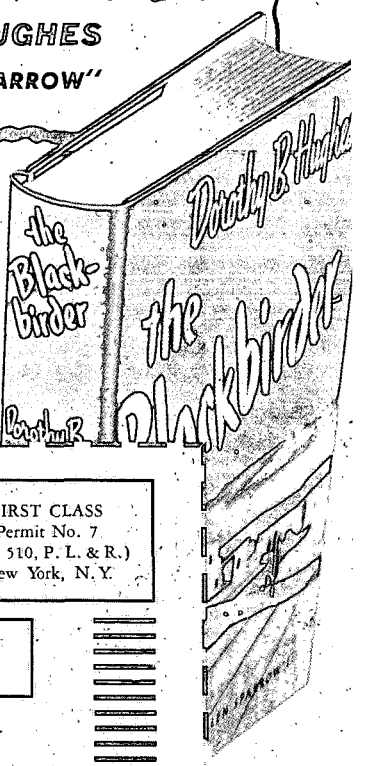

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